Included in this issue: 6-page supplement on Tourism in Egypt

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Stranded at the border

FOREIGN Minster Amr Moussa, in a press briefing yesterday, stressed the need to reach a solution to the predicament confronting the more than 1,000 Palestinians stranded on the Libyan side of the Libya-Egypt border, reports **Inas Nour**. The displaced Palestinians have been stranded on the border for nearly one month following Libya's decision in August to terminate the work contracts of the 30,000 Palestinians.

Moussa added that Egypt is continuing its efforts to reach a viable solution, and reiterated his belief that the issue would be resolved soon.

Protesting their plight, the stranded Palestinians have blocked, for the second consecutive day, commercial and public transportation between the two countries.

The majority of the 1,000 Palestinians stranded on the border have no valid travel documents, and no other country has offered them residence. Citing that they have suffered scorpion stings and been subjected to freezing temperatures, the Palestinians announced on Monday that they were on a hunger strike until representatives of international organisations such as the UN, the Red Crescent and the Arab League visit their camp. They have also requested assistance in being relocated to the self-rule areas of Gaza and Jericho.

The foreign minister also noted that no final date has been set for the expected visit to Egypt by Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. He affirmed, however, that "such a visit is welcomed at any time in the framework of a continued dialogue between the two countries."

Armed peace

THE RELATIVE peace in the Middle East is a heavily armed one, according to the Stockholm-based International Peace Research Institute's report on armed conflicts in the post-Cold War era.

Meanwhile, dozens of wars are persisting throughout the globe, the report noted. Military casualties are frequently surpassed by losses of civilians, whose villages or towns become battlefields and whose land is littered with land mines.

The report recorded 31 major armed conflicts around the world in 1994, most in poor regions of Africa, southern Asia and the troubled republics of the former Soviet Union. Many lingering conflicts, like those in southern Sudan, Georgia and the Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh, follow a typical pattern of stalemate, the report warned.

WTO meets

EGYPT is hosting the 11th session of the General Assembly of the World Tourist Organisation from 17 to 23 October, **Rehab Saad** reports. This year, the chairmanship of the General Assembly will be transferred from the Indonesian tourism minister to Dr Mamdouh El-Beltagui, Egypt's minister of tourism. Egypt will chair the General Assembly for the next two years.

This meeting of the WTO, the first to be held in a Middle Eastern country, will be attended by representatives from 112 countries, including 54 ministers of tourism.

Roundtable discussions will be held on tourism trends, marketing opportunities around the world, public-private partnerships, and new ways of managing tourism and global distribution systems.

INSIDE



photo: Sherif Sonbol

THE MR AND MRS Mahmoud Khalil Museum opens its doors to the public on Sunday. In accordance with the terms of the original bequest, the collection is finally to be exhibited in the palace that was once the family home of the Khalils. Over LE14 million has been spent on converting the palace into a museum. The region's largest collection of 19th century European art is reviewed on page 11

Non-devaluation gains ground

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) appears to have come round to Egypt's position that the Egyptian pound should not be devalued, reports **Atef El-Ghamri** from Washington

IMF delegates, meeting in Washington, supported Egypt's stand that the exchange rate of the Egyptian pound should be determined by market forces alone, sources in Washington reported.

A high-level Egyptian delegation, led by Kamal El-Ganzouri, deputy prime minister and minister of planning, leaves Washington today after talks with the IMF and World Bank on Egypt's economic reforms.

The sources said that a majority of IMF members now agree that devaluing the pound, as IMF officials had suggested earlier, would involve "clear and definite risks".

Meanwhile in Cairo, Prime Minister Atef Sidki described the outcome of the talks as "positive", reports **Mustafa El-Naggar**.

"The Washington talks showed that the Egyptian economy is on a sound track and that Egypt has carried out an important and major portion of its economic reform plan," Sidki said.

He emphasised that the government was not intervening in any way with foreign exchange rates or the rate of the Egyptian pound, but was leaving them to be determined entirely "by market forces and the law of supply and demand".

The IMF had been supportive of Egypt's present and future efforts to complete the structural economic reforms already launched, sources in Washington told the *Weekly*. These include improving the investment climate, continuing the privatisation programme and taking new legislative measures to boost the economy.

New legislation should aim at improving the performance of government machinery, promoting exports and free trade, giving the private sector a greater share in development, protecting the environment, preserving natural resources and curbing population growth. Another objective should be to institute new projects that will benefit lower-income classes, the sources said.

An unusual feature of the talks was that all IMF member countries participated in the discussion of Egypt's economic conditions. The IMF representatives will submit an evaluation report to the institution's board of directors, and this assessment will be relayed to Egypt.

Talking to reporters in Cairo, Sidki said that the economic reforms already implemented have resulted in a drop in the overall budget deficit, an improvement in the balance of payments and an increase in private investment.

The reforms have encouraged Egyptian and foreign businessmen to establish private and joint ventures, Sidki continued, and Egypt's foreign exchange reserves in the Central Bank have increased.

"These are all positive and commendable results of the policy of implementing economic reforms gradually," he said.

Tantawi lays down 'red line'

Defence Minister Hussein Tantawi, in an interview with **Galal Nassar**, reveals that he will be visiting the US within days for "a meeting of friends"

Declaring that Egypt and the United States are determined to promote their military cooperation, Defence Minister Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi said his forthcoming visit to Washington for talks with Defence Secretary William Perry would be a "meeting of friends".

Tantawi said he was invited by Perry, when he visited Cairo last January, to follow up the work of a joint military coordination committee and implement its recommendations. "Egyptian-American military cooperation has scored many successes during the past years," he said, "and we are intent on promoting this cooperation further".

In a wide-ranging interview, Tantawi told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, that committees of military historians had been commissioned to tour the battle sites in the Sinai desert and interview officers and soldiers who had fought in past wars with Israel in order to chronicle the history of that period. The results of their work would be published in the near future, he said.

On the subject of the tense relations between Egypt and Sudan, Tantawi warned the Khartoum regime that there are red lines which they must not cross. If they do they "will have to bear the consequences". These lines were the supply of Nile water to Egypt and the inviolability of the border between the two countries.

"Any threat to the Nile waters reaching Egypt not only constitutes a threat to national security but is also a threat to our very survival," he said. Although Tantawi maintained that Egypt was determined to uphold the bonds of brotherhood between the two peoples, he warned that "any provocative measures taken by the Sudanese regime against Egypt's national interests may push the situation to an even more dangerous phase".

Tantawi blamed the current crisis on the control Hassan Al-Turabi's Islamic National Front exercises over the Khartoum government. He accused Al-Turabi of seeking to destabilise neighbouring states, particularly Egypt, and providing terrorists with shelter and training.

The Egyptian-American Bright Star exercise, which is held every two years, will be staged in November, Tantawi reported. But unlike previous exercises, forces from Britain, France and the United Arab Emirates will take part. There will also be observers from Germany, Italy, Turkey, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Morocco, Jordan and Pakistan.

(For full text of interview see p.5)

Israel reneges on Taba pledge

Scarcely two weeks after the agreement on extending self-rule was signed, its promises, and the fate of Palestinian prisoners, are being left behind. **Graham Usher** reports from Jerusalem

Two weeks after the Taba agreement on extending Palestinian self-rule was signed in Washington — and one week after it was approved by a narrow majority in the Israeli Knesset — the auguries for its implementation in the coming months are becoming darker by the day. "It's as if the Israelis are trying to impose on us an agreement other than what we had agreed upon," said the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) secretary-general, Tayib Abdel-Rahim. "It is not encouraging."

Talks held in Gaza on 8 October between senior Israeli and PNA security officials to hammer out a timetable for Israel's redeployment in the West Bank ended without agreement, with chief PNA negotiator General Ziyad Atrash saying there were still "major differences" between the two sides. Even Israel's much vaunted evacuation this week of four "civil" administration offices in West Bank were, in Atrash's opinion, not "redeployment", since the transfer of these local authorities had already been agreed prior to the Taba agreement.

But the real spanner in the works is the ongoing dispute over the release of 26 Palestinian female political prisoners still interned in Israeli jails. As was widely predicted, on 6 October Israeli President Ezer Weizman refused to commute the sentences of two of their number because they were "convicted murderers" of Israelis. Two days later, the Israeli army's Central Commander Ilan Biran refused to commute the sentences of two more female prisoners on the same grounds.

PNA officials immediately denounced these decisions as a violation of the Taba Agreement, and 21 of the remaining female prisoners signalled their opposition by refusing to sign an Israeli demanded "oath" renouncing violence and swearing to uphold the law. They remain, therefore, in prison. Even the single woman who did sign — 18-year old Bashayer Abu Laben, who was serving a seven year sentence for attempting to stab a soldier — said on her release that she only did so because she was unaware of the other women's stand. On hearing of their refusal, she says, "I felt terrible."

Like so much else in the Taba agreement — and in the Oslo process generally — Israel's commitment to release Palestinian female prisoners is now riddled with ambiguity, despite a text which, as PNA negotiator, Saeb Erekat, says, "on this issue is black and white".

Annex VII of the agreement states explicitly that "all female prisoners and detainees shall be released in the first phase of [prisoner] releases", due "upon signing" of the agreement. The fact that the Israeli president has now overruled this commitment, in the view of Israeli monitoring group, Peace Watch, "does not absolve the government of Israel of its responsibility to implement all articles of the agreement". Nor could it, since it would mean the Israeli president possessing the power to annul any agreement an Israeli government makes with any party, foreign or otherwise.

What applies to other parties, however, appears not apply to Palestinians. "We recommended that all female prisoners should be released," said Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, on 9 October. "But the Israeli constitution gives independence [of decision making] to the president. We warned the Palestinians of this" in the negotiations.

But the issue at hand — at least for the PNA — is that such a proviso does not appear in the agreement's text which means that Israel's pledge to free "all" female prisoners cannot be bound by it. "We did not ignore the issue of the president's prerogatives in the Taba negotiations," says the PNA negotiator responsible for prisoners, Nabil Shaath. "But we negotiated the agreement on basis that the Israeli government would refuse these prerogatives." That Rabin and Peres subsequently and so quickly acquiesced to their president's overruling suggests either political spinelessness or, as many Palestinians suspect, utter bad faith. Neither is a particularly admirable quality for "making peace".

PNA reaction to the debacle so far has been one of cautious anger, but with no hint of stopping the redeployment process. PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, downplayed the prisoner issue at his 7 October meeting with Peres, saying only that he was "sure all the women prisoners will be released." Other responses have been more forthright. On 8 October, head of Fatah's Supreme Council in Gaza, Hisham Abdel-Raziq, warned that the 5,300 prisoners in Israeli jails would launch "protests and hunger strikes" if Israel refused to abide by the agreement.

On 10 October — the day on which around 500 political and 500 criminal prisoners were due to be freed — only 350 were actually released. Of these, according to Israeli sources, 200 were political prisoners, which means that 300 others had refused to sign the "oath of release" in solidarity with the women prisoners. Such a split in the prisoners' ranks suggests demoralisation rather than the bases for united action. This is hardly surprising given Oslo's history of failed promises on the prisoner issue from both the Israelis and, much more damagingly, from the prisoners' own political leadership. "We will support whatever the prisoners decide to do," was the most PLO advisor, Ahmed Tibi, could muster on this score. This, too, is not an encouraging sign.

Leaders return

THREE Senior Palestinian leaders, who had hitherto been denied entry to the Occupied Territories, were permitted to return and will take charge of West Bank towns after an Israeli pullout. Palestinian officials said Mustafa Litawi and Mahmoud Alul crossed from Jordan into the Gaza Strip on Tuesday and the third Nabil Abu Irdeineh was expected to cross within hours.

Also yesterday Israeli troops handed over to Palestinian control three more offices of the West Bank military government in the villages of Yatta, Qabatiyeh and Kharbata. The handover is part of the agreement on Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank signed on 28 September.

Meanwhile, the Islamic movement Hamas said its leaders have agreed to resume dialogue with the Palestinian National Authority on peaceful coexistence but denied, in a statement released yesterday, giving any pledges on stopping resistance operations against Israeli occupation. *(see p4)*

Islamist allies part ways

Despite official denials, there are signs that the tripartite alliance between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Labour and Liberal parties may be falling apart. **Amira Howeidy** investigates

Analysts believe that the switch from the slate to the individual candidacy system in the approaching parliamentary elections has made redundant an eight-year-old alliance between the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood and the Labour and Liberal parties. The tripartite coalition was forged prior to the 1987 elections to make it possible for Brotherhood figures to run on the Labour-Liberal slates. But in the forthcoming ballot, expected at the end of November, the analysts argue that Brotherhood members no longer need the official backing of their erstwhile allies because they can contest the elections as independents.

Despite denials by Brotherhood, Labour and Liberal officials, the first sign that the alliance might have been overtaken by events emerged two weeks ago when the Labour Party's mouthpiece, *Al-Shaab*, published a 10-point statement expounding the party's position. This contrasted sharply with what the three allies did in 1987 when they published a joint manifesto, spearheaded by the Brotherhood's motto "Islam is the solution". This slogan was missing from the Labour Party's published programme this year.

Labour Party insiders also say that opposition to the continuation of the alliance was mounting in party ranks as a result of the government's crackdown on the Brotherhood. "The Labour Party may end up paying the price," said a party source, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "The Brotherhood's actions and ideas, which are unacceptable to the government, are mistakenly thought by officials to be ours as well and we could end up losing our credibility."

In the view of Diaa Rashwan, an expert on political Islam, the tripartite alliance has already collapsed. "There are conflicting positions within the Labour Party concerning the relationship with the Brotherhood and the survival of the alliance," he said. "Moreover, the Labour Party found itself being dragged into a battle which does not concern it, as a result of the measures taken by the government against the Brotherhood. It should be pointed out that the Brotherhood's policy of escalation, in response to the government's measures, runs counter to the more peace-oriented policy of the Labour Party."

Rashwan said that many Labour members want the party to content itself with providing only moral support to the Brotherhood.

And yet Brotherhood, Labour and Liberal officials continue to insist that their alliance is as strong as ever. "The close relations between those who forged the 1987 coalition have not changed," insisted Brotherhood spokesman Maamoun El-Hodeibi. "There is coordination between us despite the switch to the individual candidacy system. This can be seen on the ground. Members of the coalition are not running against each other in the same constituency."

Despite this assertion, Hodeibi himself is running in the Cairo constituency of Dokki against Al-Hamza De'bes, a high-ranking official in the Liberal Party. Hodeibi apparently decided to nominate himself in Dokki because Adel Hussein, Labour's secretary-general, is running in Heliopolis, Hodeibi's own constituency.

De'bes, who has contested elections in Dokki for years, said he had not been informed of any coordination between the Liberal Party and the Brotherhood. But Liberal leader Mustafa Kamal Murad insisted that there was "total coordination between us and the Brotherhood".

Brotherhood figures are also running against Labour Party members in several constituencies outside Cairo. These include Talkha in the Daqahliya governorate, where the Brotherhood's Mossad El-Zeini is running against Amin Dakrouri, the Labour Party's provincial secretary-general. Efforts are being made to avoid a repetition of the Talkha situation in the constituencies of Awseem and Hawamdiya in the Giza governorate and Al-Raml in Alexandria.

Nagi El-Shehabi, Labour's assistant secretary-general for election affairs, said that as a result of the switch to the individual candidacy system, the "alliance" had been replaced by "coordination". Asked about mounting opposition within Labour to cooperation with the Brotherhood, El-Shehabi said that Labour leader Ibrahim Shukri "will not withdraw from an eight-year-old coalition just because the Brotherhood is having a hard time. It is against his ethics." But he conceded that Labour would be paying a price if "coordination" meant the withdrawal of some of its candidates in favour of Brotherhood figures.

As for the Liberal Party, Rashwan believes it has no place in the coalition. "It is clear from the many newspapers which it publishes — Nasserist, socialist and Islamist — that it does not even represent what is called the Islamist trend, but is a mosaic of mixed ideas. How can it fit into an Islamist coalition?"

New blow to Brotherhood

As 48 Muslim Brotherhood figures stand trial before a military court, 15 other members of the outlawed group were rounded up, accused of attempting to incite public opinion

In what appears to be a continuing crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, the Interior Ministry announced on Monday that 15 members of the illegal organisation had been arrested for attempting to incite public opinion and providing support to escaped terrorists. A statement by the outlawed Brotherhood said the police action was meant to prevent some of those arrested, who include doctors, engineers and university professors, from contesting the approaching parliamentary elections.

The Interior Ministry said the 15 Brotherhood members had set up a "leadership group" whose aims were:

— To open communication channels with escaped terrorists, particularly in the governorates of Al-Minya and Assiut, and provide them with financial support for "expanding the circle of their terrorist activities".

— To provide financial support for the families of those escaped terrorists, as well as others under arrest, "within the framework of solidarity between the organisation and the terrorist factions".

— To incite public opinion by printing statements and leaflets containing provocative expressions and severe criticism of the government and distributing them in Middle Egypt and the Nile Delta.

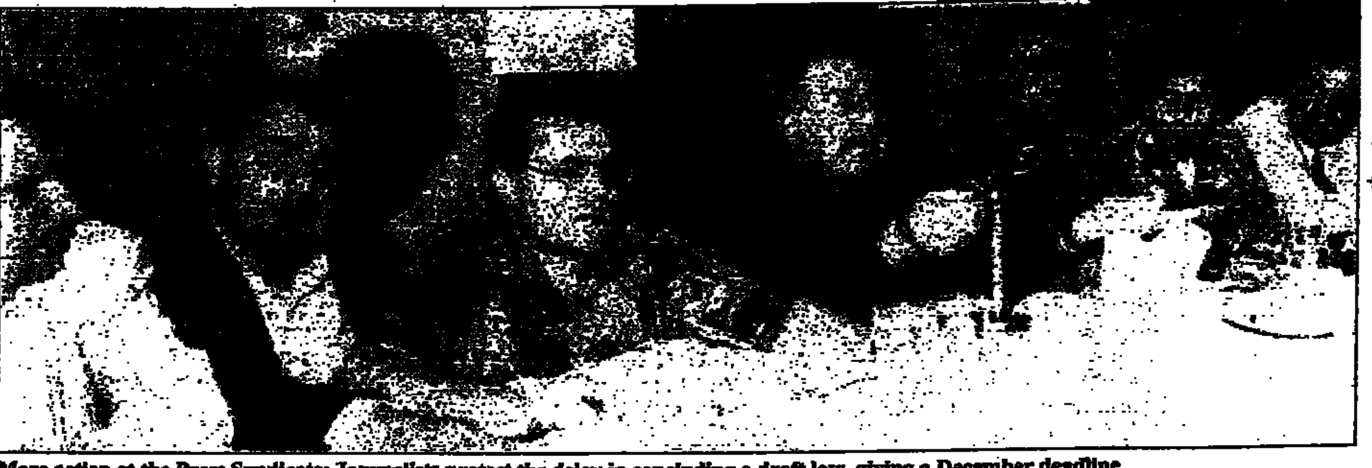
— To open communication channels between Brotherhood-controlled professional syndicates, and foreign organisations, issuing statements, printing posters and publishing news in some opposition newspapers related to the military trial of Brotherhood figures, with the aim of spreading confusion.

Those arrested included Dr Abdel-Moneim Abul-Fottouh, assistant secretary-general of the Arab Doctors Union, Dr Hussein Shehata, a professor at Al-Azhar University's Faculty of Commerce, Dr Mahmoud Ezzat, a professor at Zagazig University's Faculty of Medicine, Dr Abdel-Sattar El-Meligi, a lecturer at the Suez Canal University's Faculty of Science, Dr Anwar Hassan Shehata, the treasurer of the Doctors' Syndicate, Dr Mahmoud Hussein, a professor at Assiut University's Faculty of Engineering and the treasurer of the Engineers' Syndicate, and Dr Saad Zagloul Ashmawi, secretary-general of the Cairo branch of the Doctors' Syndicate.

The Interior Ministry said documents had been seized from the homes of those arrested outlining the Brotherhood's "structures" in some governorates as well as its plan of action for the parliamentary elections. Letters exchanged between the Brotherhood and its Sudanese counterpart as well as pictures showing Abul-Fottouh with Afghan *Mujaheddin* "in the Afghanistan battlefields" were also seized.

The Brotherhood's statement said the arrests were made "while the various political forces were making preparations for their candidates to contest the approaching elections". It said that Abul-Fottouh had been arrested as he worked on his official candidacy papers and that lawyer Mohamed Gharib, another of those arrested, acted as the attorney of Maamoun El-Hodeibi, the Brotherhood's spokesman, who is running for election in the Cairo constituency of Dokki.

The police action, the Brotherhood claimed, "proves the government's determination to falsify the will of the people, corrupt parliamentary life and sow fear and terror in the souls of the people." And, while pro-government candidates have full campaigning freedoms, "the government uses twisted methods to prevent honourable citizens...from exercising their constitutional right of running for election."



photos: Khaled El-Fiqi

More action at the Press Syndicate: Journalists protest the delay in concluding a draft law, giving a December deadline





December deadline for new press law

The Press Syndicate has decided to give a government-appointed committee the benefit of the doubt as well as additional time to prepare a new press law. **Shaden Shehab** reports

A general assembly of the Press Syndicate on Sunday set a 24 December deadline for a government-appointed committee to complete the preparation of a new press law to replace Law 93 of 1995, which angered journalists by stiffening penalties for publication offences. If this deadline is not met, the assembly decided, syndicate members serving on the committee should walk out.

At the assembly — the third since Law 93 was passed at the end of May — many journalists expressed frustration, suspecting the committee of dragging its feet deliberately in the hope that the journalists' anger would eventually subside. Nevertheless the assembly decided to give the committee the benefit of the doubt and commissioned 18 journalists and legal experts to draft a new press law, to be completed by 8 November, and forwarded to the committee, presumably to spur it into action.

The committeee, set up by the Higher Press Council in mid-July, and including legal experts, public personalities and journalists, has met three times. In all three meetings, copies of foreign press laws and related legal studies were distributed to members, but the contents of the new press law were not broached.

Unlike the two previous assemblies which were packed by journalists, only a few hundred showed up for Sunday's assembly. Analysts viewed this as a reflection of the sense of frustration, and possibly despair, prevailing among journalists. When the 24 December deadline was announced, many journalists, believing that they should threaten strike action if that deadline was not met, shouted "work stoppage, strike," from the floor. As a compromise, a follow-up committee was established to suggest forms of "democratic protest". This decision was greeted with applause. A fourth general assembly will be held on 24 December to review the situation.

Sunday's assembly began with an address from the syndicate's chairman Ibrahim Nafie, who was in Syria, which was delivered on his behalf by deputy chairman Galal Eissa. "The final goal is to have Law 93 for 1995 repealed," the speech said. "This is the target that determines our moves in all directions and at all levels."

Many of the assembly's resolutions were based on proposals advanced by Hussein Abdel-Razek, chief editor of *Al-Yassar* (Left) magazine. He told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the syndicate "is now starting the second round with the government, which will involve mobilising public opinion and using methods of legal pressure."

Although Abdel-Razek praised the assembly as "successful" and said it had come up with satisfactory resolutions, he nevertheless noted the low attendance, which he put down to Nafie's absence and a two-hour delay in starting the meeting.

Meanwhile Magdi Mehanna, a member of the Press Syndicate's council, commented that "we have come up with reasonable resolutions. We are opening doors for the government and giving them more chances. Let us wait and see."

The crisis between the government and the Press Syndicate erupted when Law 93, with its harsh penalties for the publication of false or malicious news, was pushed hastily through parliament at the end of May without prior consultation with the syndicate. As part of a negotiated compromise, President Hosni Mubarak agreed on 21 June to set up a special committee to prepare a new press law, promising that it would be sent to a new session of parliament, expected to convene towards the end of this year.

The Press Syndicate has held two previous extraordinary general assemblies to deal with the crisis. The 10 June meeting threatened to stage a one-day strike unless Law 93 was repealed. However, the threat was frozen at the 24 June assembly where it was agreed to set another date for a work stoppage if the dialogue with the government or the preparation of a new press law reached a dead end.

In addition the syndicate pledged to throw its weight behind journalists running in the November parliamentary elections.

Early poll for Copts

The Copts of Cairo are getting an early taste of elections, voting tomorrow for a new Community Council, dubbed by some as the Coptic parliament. **Omayma Abdel-Latif** reports

More than 4,000 Coptic voters are expected to queue tomorrow (Friday) outside ballot boxes at the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Abbasiya to choose 24 out of 55 candidates running for election for a new Community Council. Many of the candidates, who, for the first time, include three women, are campaigning for a "more politicised role" for the council, known in Arabic as *Al-Maglis Al-Melli*.

The council, a secular body of prominent Coptic figures, was first established in 1871 to oversee the affairs of the Coptic community as well as the running of endowments made to the church for charity purposes. But the council, which is elected for a five-year term, lost much of its clout in the late 1950s after the government, represented by the Ministry of *Al-Awqaf* (religious endowments), took over the administration of the endowments.

"The new council should act as a link between the church and the state," said candidate Mounir Fakhri Abdel-Nour. "It should serve as a channel for the expression of Copts' political position, thus helping to end their apathy." Abdel-Nour also plans to contest the approaching People's Assembly elections, running in the Cairo constituency of Al-Waili.

According to candidate Fouad Bakhoum, many candidates believe that membership of the Community Council is a step toward People's Assembly, and possibly cabinet, membership. "Most Copts who served on the cabinet were originally members of the Community Council," Bakhoum said.

Along with several other candidates, he stressed the importance of a greater Coptic involvement in politics, arguing that participation in the Community Council elections would encourage Copts to take part in the parliamentary ballot. "Even if the number of Coptic candidates nominated by the parties is small," he argued, "Copts should break their long isolation from political life and get on with political participation."

Political participation, along with youth unemployment and basic services for poor Coptic families are high on the agenda of many candidates.

The Coptic newspaper *Watani* published earlier this week what it called the "blessed list" of 24 candidates, claiming it had the support of Pope Shenoudah III, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church. But church officials denied any involvement in the list. "The report is groundless. The Pope made it clear in all his public appearances last week that he supports no candidates except those chosen by the Coptic people," said Talaat Gadallah of the church's information centre.

This is the first council election to include women among the candidates. "Within the Coptic community, there are many women voters and they need to be represented on the council which looks after Coptic affairs," said candidate Dr Nabila Mikhail.

A Coptic affairs expert stressed the importance of a harmonious relationship between the council and the church.

"The church sometimes takes decisions and launches activities without prior consultation with the council, although it is the representative of the Coptic community," said Zaki Shenoudah, head of the Coptic Studies Institute. "This has caused friction in the past between the church and the council."

But since Pope Shenoudah became head of the church 24 years ago, Zaki added, the friction has declined, although the community's problems remain. "We hope a strong council will help Copts find their way in the political arena, with the church dealing open-mindedly with the solutions suggested by the council for many of the chronic problems of Egypt's Copts," he said.

'Birds of darkness' — off the screen

Lawsuits filed by Islamist lawyers to intimidate intellectuals or muzzle the freedom of expression are becoming a phenomenon whose latest victim is Adel Imam's film *Birds of Darkness*





photos: Al-Ahram

Arafa leaves the court with Hamed (left), lead actors Adel Imam and Youssra

When Wahid Hamed wrote the script for Adel Imam's latest film *Birds of Darkness* — a variation on the theme of political Islam, terrorism and corruption — he hardly imagined that he would soon become the target of real-life "birds of darkness". But on 16 September, Islamist lawyer Mahmoud Riad filed a lawsuit at the Abdin Misdemeanours Court, seeking an injunction to ban the film on the grounds that it "tarnishes the dignity of lawyers and their profession". Hearings were postponed until 19 November.

This was the second lawsuit filed by Islamist lawyers within the space of a few months to stop the screening of a popular film. They earlier succeeded in winning a court order to ban Youssef Chahine's *The Emigrant*, but the ban was later lifted by a higher court.

Although the complaint against *Birds of Darkness* made no reference to alleged degradation of Islamic symbols, as was the case with *The Emigrant*, it is seen as a link in a chain of attempts to muzzle freedom of expression and creativity. Riad was arrested in 1987 along with others in connection with an abortive attempt on the life of former Interior Minister Hassan Abu Basha. More recently, he was detained for taking part in demonstrations by lawyers protesting the death of their colleague, Abdel-Hareth Madani, while in police custody last year.

Birds of Darkness, which deals with the larger subject of the political malaise of this country, addresses the phenomenon of lawyers who have taken to filing lawsuits against public figures and intellectuals. One of the two principal characters in the film is Ali El-Zanati, a communist-turned-Islamist who is paid to open a law office where he recruits young lawyers to file the lawsuits. The other main character, Fathi Noufal, played by Adel Imam, decides to work for a corrupt cabinet minister, to accumulate riches and influence. The two characters are eventually arrested.

In the course of the film, reference is made to real-life lawsuits filed by Islamist lawyers since the middle of 1994, including the case against *The Emigrant*. Hamed's script accuses those lawyers of working for external forces who finance them, just as they also finance acts of terrorism.

Dr Kamal Abul-Magd, a moderate Islamic thinker and a lawyer, rejected this phenomenon of litigation as an indication of "the bankruptcy of civil society". It also reflected the "politicisation of the Bar Association which has begun to assume the role of political parties and authorities." Using the association in this way, said Abul-Magd, is "an unhealthy sign. These lawyers are ignoring all the major legislative changes taking place in Egypt right now and occupy themselves with these trivial matters."

The attempt to induce the state to "rap the knuckles of intellectuals or those who express certain views" is unacceptable, Abul-Magd said. Yet, he added, it was a sign of the frustration of some sections of society, who turn to the law as the last resort. Abul-Magd warned that this trend, by seeking to muzzle the freedom of expression, is "fraught with dangerous consequences".

Supporting this view, Hamed told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that these lawyers are "obstructing justice because they waste the time of the judges and other people who have more important things to do." Hamed has filed a counter-lawsuit, accusing Riad of slandering him and the film. Hamed remained optimistic, but said that "those characters in my film have actually come to life and they are the *birds of darkness*".

Seventy-five lawyers have taken Hamed's side, volunteering to defend him and the film. But Islamist lawyer Moukhtar Nouh, treasurer of the Bar Association, defended the Islamist lawyers on the grounds that "all other channels are closed in their faces. How can they give expression to their position except by going to court?" Resorting to the law, he said, "is better than resorting to violence".

The succession of legal cases brought by Islamists include a lawsuit in September 1994 against Education Minister Hussein Kamel Bahaeddin, for issuing a decree which banned the veil in schools without parental consent. Bahaeddin won, but only after the contents of the decree were watered down. Another lawsuit filed around the same time sought to prevent the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) from taking place in Cairo. The Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR) later countered by filing a lawsuit against the sheikh of Al-Azhar for advocating the practice of female genital mutilation.

A group of Islamist lawyers also filed a lawsuit demanding the separation of Dr Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid, a professor of Arabic literature, from his wife on the grounds that he *had* renounced Islam. The court that first heard the case threw it out but a higher court ruled in the Islamist lawyers' favour.

Hisham Mubarak, a lawyer who heads the Legal Aid Centre for Human Rights, said the litigation phenomenon is "part of the action taken by the supporters of political Islam who seek to judge society". Mubarak argued that political Islam was on the rise in three areas: the militant groups which resort to violence; the Muslim Brotherhood which had opted for non-violent action; and sympathisers with the Brotherhood and other Islamist groups.

"These lawyers are using the legal system to muzzle freedom of expression," Mubarak said. "This was clear in the Abu Zeid case which they won. Now they think that they can play the same card again and again and win."

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Born at the centre

Egypt's political parties are bracing themselves for November's parliamentary elections. This week, *Al-Ahram Weekly* launches a series reviewing the history and platforms of the major contenders in the forthcoming elections. The first instalment, compiled by **Gamal Essam El-Din** and **Nevine Khalil**, deals with the ruling National Democratic Party

Reacting to the opposition

The ruling party's official weekly mouthpiece, *Mayo*, has been trying to meet the challenge of a highly vocal opposition press

In March 1981, *Mayo* (May) was launched amid high aspirations, backed by the personal support of President Sadat. The mouthpiece of the NDP was named after what Sadat termed his May 1971 "Corrective Revolution". It was to become a strong competitor with well-established national newspapers, scoops, inside stories and a guest column by none other than the president himself. Critics, however, say the ruling party's mouthpiece has failed to come up to the expectations of its founders.

Sadat launched *Mayo* seven months before his assassination in October 1981. He envisaged it as a colossal publication, able to rival anything on the newsstands. His interest in the paper went beyond that expected of a political leader for his party's mouthpiece. He was intent on adding his own touch to distinguish *Mayo* from other publications — through his weekly column entitled *Araft Ha'ola'* (I knew those people), and as a newsmaker, providing scoops and exclusives.

"With the president as our star columnist and provider of news, no other paper had a chance," reminisces Abdallah Abdel-Bari, chairman of NDP publications, which includes *Mayo*.

But when Hosni Mubarak took over, political liberalisation was expanded and other party newspapers began to appear, luring readers by heaping criticism on the government. "We did not stand a chance after that because we did not criticise the government; the president was no longer our columnist, and *Mayo* no longer had exclusive stories," Abdel-Bari recalled. "Now all we do is react to the opposition press, which of course does not give a newspaper any substance." The chairman was quick to add, however, that efforts are being exerted to breathe new life into *Mayo*.

According to Khalil Sabbat, professor of journalism at Cairo University, *Mayo* has three major deficiencies: it lacks a full-time editor devoted solely to the paper; has a naive style of writing reminiscent of the much-criticised opposition press; and its contents are lacking in substantial news. "All *Mayo* does is react to the opposition," Sabbat said, "which does not warrant a newspaper".

Sabbat believes that *Mayo*'s function should not be to praise and defend the NDP, but to discuss issues in a rational, credible manner. Its board chairman acknowledges that currently the newspaper only reacts to criticism of the government or NDP figures. "Our role is reduced to reacting to opposition, because we lack all the factors which distinguished us in the past," Abdel-Bari said.

Only a handful of the 65 Mayo reporters are members of the NDP. Most are unhappy with their working conditions, complaining that they have no offices, and work out of one ill-equipped room in *Al-Gomhouriya* and another in *Al-Ahram* newspaper, or from home. The paper's official offices are in a villa in Zamalek, but reporters say that they only go there to pick up their pay. They also object to reporters from *Al-Gomhouriya* and *Al-Massa*, which share the same publisher as *Mayo*, being assigned most of the work. Abdel-Bari admitted that there is a dependency on *Al-Massa* reporters, who account for more than half of the working staff.

Although *Mayo* has been licensed as a daily newspaper since its launch, it nevertheless continues to come out only once a week. The only exception is during election periods when the paper sometimes comes out daily.

According to Abdel-Bari, *Mayo* was earmarked for a circulation of half a million at its inception, but began with 200,000. "For the next few issues our circulation doubled and tripled until it levelled off at 750,000," Abdel-Bari said. "A number which we hadn't dreamed of." Now, however, official estimates stand at 75,000.

Sabbat suggests that the NDP needs to sit down and discuss its paper's needs, like a fulltime chief editor who does not have other journalistic duties. Finding an editor-in-chief who is willing to put in the time and effort needed to produce a presentable newspaper has always been a problem for *Mayo*. Since its first edition in 1981, *Mayo*'s editors-in-chief were national newspaper journalists like *Al-Akhbar*'s Ibrahim Se'da (1981-82, 1984-89), Ahmed Sabri Abul-Magd (1982-1984), *Al-Ahram*'s Anis Mansour (1989-92) and currently Samir Ragab, board chairman of Al-Tahrir publishing house which puts out *Al-Gomhouriya* and *Al-Massa*, of which he is also the chief editor, along with *Mayo*. Ragab also prints and distributes *Mayo* through Al-Tahrir. "It is more practical for the chief editor to run *Mayo* from where he works," Abdel-Bari commented.

While Sabbat argues that since the NDP "is politically comfortable, with a majority in parliament," it should take time to develop its mouthpiece and "address the public in an intelligent manner", Abdel-Bari says that *Mayo*'s current top priority is to complete its own printing complex in the 6th of October City. The *Mayo* printing house was to be a gigantic printing and publishing centre, like those of *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Akhbar*. The foundations were laid down in the 6th of October City a week before the first issue was published in 1981, but there has been little progress since then.

While waiting for its printing complex to be completed, *Mayo* was first printed and distributed by *Al-Ahram* organisation and its advertising was also managed by *Al-Ahram*, an arrangement which continued until 1992 when its current chief editor Samir Ragab took up his post, and production switched to Al-Tahrir.

Following the 1973 War and the Egyptian-Israeli agreement that it would be their last, the late President Anwar El-Sadat began to devote greater attention to the domestic front. He kicked off the economic open-door policy and took steps to switch the nation to a multi-party political system. In 1974, he announced that the Arab Socialist Union, until then Egypt's sole political party, would have three wings or forums, representing the right, left and centre. Two years later, the ASU was disbanded and the three forums were upgraded to fully-fledged political parties: the centrist Arab Socialist-Misr Party, under the leadership of then Prime Minister Mamdouh Salem; the leftist Tagammu under Khaled Mohieddin; and the rightist Socialist Liberal Party under Mustafa Kamel Murad. According to political analyst Mohamed Sid-Ahmed, the switch to a multi-party system was part of a larger political switch in the direction of the West, particularly the United States.

Dramatic events in 1977 and 1978 then prompted Sadat to establish his own political party. According to Sid-Ahmed, those events included the food price riots of January 1977, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November of the same year, the failure of the Misr Party to successfully confront the parliamentary opposition and the re-birth of Fouad Serageddin's New Wafd Party in May 1978.

In a speech marking the 26th anniversary of the July 1952 Revolution, Sadat announced the formation of a new political party to fill the political vacuum and shut the door in the face of the old political forces — an allusion to the Wafd — that "seek to destroy our new democracy". According to Sid-Ahmed, the decision amounted to an attempt by Sadat to tighten his control on power and purge his political opponents.

In August 1978, Sadat announced that the new party would be called the National Democratic Party — after the old and defunct National Party established by Mustafa Kamel, an anti-British nationalist leader, in 1907. In Sadat's view, it was Kamel's party which had truly reflected the aspirations of Egyptians until the decline of partisan politics in the 1920s "at the hands of the Wafd Party". In September of the same year, Salem resigned the chairmanship of the Misr Party and around 250 People's Assembly members rushed to join the NDP.

Following a nationwide referendum, Sadat dissolved the People's Assembly and new elections were held in June 1979, in which the NDP won a sweeping majority, grabbing 347 seats out of 390. In this Assembly, NDP deputies grappled with a number of vital issues, including "food security" projects, amending the personal status law, improving the financial well-being of government employees, the impact of Port Said's new free zone on local industry and codifying Islamic *shari'a*.

A number of NDP deputies were removed from the Assembly on various charges: Alexandria's Rashad Osman for profiteering illegally from timber sales, Rosetta's Mahmoud Suleiman for drug trafficking, and Kom Ombo's Salah Abul-Magd for trading in state land. A handful of other NDP members were stripped of their parliamentary immunity.

At the NDP's first congress in October 1980, Sadat was elected chairman, Hosni Mubarak, deputy chairman, Fikri Makram Ebeid secretary-general and Mustafa Khalil, deputy chairman for foreign affairs. One month after the second party congress was held in September 1981, Sadat was assassinated and Mubarak took over both as president of the republic and NDP chairman.

In the 1984 elections, the NDP also won a sweeping majority — 390 seats out of 458 — but faced opposition from a newly-forged alliance between the Wafd Party and the Muslim Brotherhood. That parliament witnessed heated debates on such issues as the 1986 mutiny of the Central Security Forces, recurring shortages of some basic foodstuffs, granting asylum to former Sudanese President Gaafar Numeiri and the terrorist crimes committed by the Islamic Jihad organisation. Meanwhile, two NDP members were indicted by the Court of Ethics on corruption charges.

In 1987, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that the slate system used in the Assembly elections was unconstitutional and the Assembly was dissolved. New elections were held and a new Assembly convened in May of the same year, with the NDP again winning a sweeping majority — 348 seats out of 458. The opposition this time came mainly from a "tripartite alliance" between the Labour and Liberal parties and the Muslim Brotherhood. In this Assembly, NDP deputies lobbied for new laws on investment and land reclamation and demanded that public sector companies be financially reformed. Headed by leading NDP figure, Speaker Rifaat El-Mahgoub, the Assembly refused to comply with Court of Cassation rulings declaring the election of 78 deputies null and void, on the basis of electoral malpractice. El-Mahgoub, supported by the NDP majority, insisted that parliament was soverign in all matters concerning its membership.

In 1990, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that a combination of the slate and individual systems, which was used in electing the Assembly, was unconstitutional and the Assembly was dissolved again. Another Assembly was elected in November. This time the majority of opposition parties boycotted the election. The NDP won 417 seats out of a total of 453, five seats went to the Tagammu, which had not joined the boycott, and 31 to independents.

According to Wahid Abdel-Meguid of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, the performance of NDP deputies in this Assembly was poor. "They were not able to exercise strong control over the government's performance," he said. "In fact, they gave the impression of being members of a party which the government desperately needed to pass its new economic reform laws."

But according to the Assembly's "achievements report", NDP members raised a variety of important issues, including the crisis of the so-called Islamic money investment companies, transgressions on state land, the problems of public sector companies, the impact of new agricultural liberalisation policies on farmers and the sprouting of haphazard communities around big cities.

Platform

In announcing the birth of the new party, Sadat said its programme of action would be based on certain principles: promoting social democracy, fostering Egypt's affiliation to the Arab world, venerating religious values and a type of economic liberalisation that encouraged private investment in socio-economic development projects. Sadat also stressed that the state had a role in "supplying food to each mouth and a house for each family and establishing a modern state based on faith and science".

To date, the party's platform remains basically unchanged. According to a report issued by the NDP's secretariat in 1994, the NDP upholds democracy and the multi-party system, the freedom of the press and the judiciary, respect for human rights and a strong parliament that exercises effective control on government actions. On the confrontation of terrorism, the report said, "There is an urgent need to mobilise all sectors of the population, through political parties and legitimate institutions, to confront the forces of darkness."

In socio-economic terms, the NDP's report cited a pressing need to give the private sector a greater role in developing the Egyptian economy. The report suggested this could be done by facilitating investment and export procedures and giving Egyptian investors a greater say in economic legislation and decisions. However, the NDP believes that a strong state role should be maintained in a market-oriented economy: "This role is essential because it safeguards the lower and middle income brackets from falling prey to any emerging private monopolies or inflationary pressures," the report said.

In foreign policy, the report came out in favour of strengthening Egyptian-US relations because close bilateral ties have proved highly beneficial to Egypt's political and economic interests. It also also declared support for Mubarak's peace policy and his efforts to narrow the gap between the negotiating parties, and urged that Arab disputes should be settled peacefully, and the territorial integrity of Iraq and Lebanon maintained.

Funding

According to NDP officials, the party is subsidised by a yearly amount of LE100,000 from the Shura Council as well as LE250,000 from subscriptions to the NDP's publications, *Mayo* and *Al-Liwa Al-Islami*.

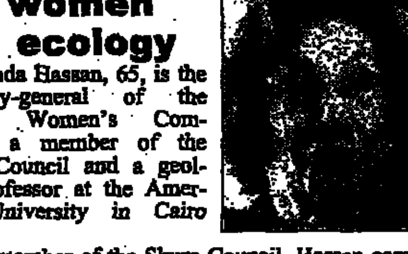
In October 1978, the National Development Bank (NDB) was established to finance the NDP's development projects. The National Bank, Banque Misr and the Bank of Alexandria each contributed one quarter of the NDB's LE20 million capital while the fourth quarter came from private subscribers, primarily Osman Ahmed Osman, Sadat's minister of reconstruction at the time.

Membership

According to a party report, the number of NDP members stood at 400 in August 1978 and rose to 900 in October of the same year, jumped to 2,275 million in October 1992 and to 3,601 million in October 1995.

Not all leading NDP members are government ministers. Below, the *Weekly* profiles three of the party's parliamentary movers

For women and ecology



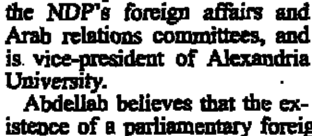
Farkhonda Hassan, 65, is the secretary-general of the NDP's Women's Committee, a member of the Shura Council and a geology professor at the American University in Cairo (AUC).

As a member of the Shura Council, Hassan campaigned for women's rights, the environment and scientific and technological progress. She was recently a member of the official Egyptian delegation to the Beijing women's conference. In the 1980s she was instrumental in the passing of a number of laws concerning the protection of the Nile from pollution, the founding of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency and nature reserves such as Ras Mohamed. Early in her political career, Hassan also opposed the attempt to establish a nuclear power plant along the northern coast of Egypt, which she felt would be a form of technological and scientific colonisation.

Born in 1930, Hassan graduated from Cairo University's Faculty of Science in 1952. It was not until a decade later that she pursued her post-graduate studies in Pittsburgh University where she recieved a PhD in geology in 1970. She has been a professor of geology at the AUC since 1964.

First elected to the People's Assembly in 1979, she has served for four successive terms, and was the first woman from the Third World to receive an honorary life membership of the International Parliamentary Union. During her career, Hassan has held a number of posts in international institutions concerned with women, the environment and development.

Parliamentary diplomat



Mohamed Abdellah, 49, is chairman of the foreign affairs committee in parliament as well as the NDP's foreign affairs and Arab relations committees, and is vice-president of Alexandria University.

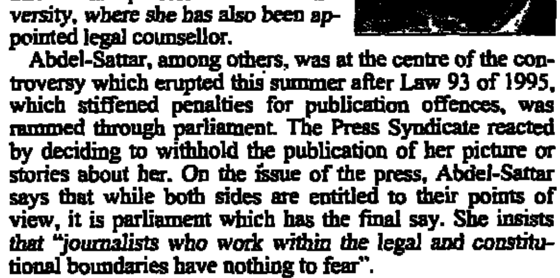
Abdellah believes that the existence of a parliamentary foreign affairs committee is necessary to foster relations with other parliaments and to explain Egypt's policies in parliamentary forums. In an evolving world of diplomacy, argues Abdellah, contacts on the executive level are no longer the only instrument of foreign policy, "Hence it is important to develop parliamentary channels which can be very effective." A specialist in the tax system, his other main interests are foreign relations and developing the educational system.

Born in 1946 in Alexandria, Abdellah graduated from the Faculty of Commerce, Alexandria University, when he was 20, and returned to lecture there after recieving his doctorate. While peparing for his PhD in economics from Paris University, Abdellah was a syndicated reporter on economic news and later a writer on Middle East affairs for Agence France Presse. While in France, the 1973 War broke out, prompting him to become an activist among students, in the media and televised debates.

He was one of the 100 founders of the National Democratic Party, soon became NDP secretary-general for Alexandria and was elected to the People's Assembly a year later. In 1982 he was appointed to the NDP's general secretariat.

In 1987 he received a Francophone decoration as a member of the Francophone Parliamentary Union and five years later was awarded the *Légion d'Honneur* by the French government.

Contentious legislator



Fawzia Abdel-Sattar Ali, 64, heads the legislative committee of the People's Assembly and is a member of the NDP's women's, legislative, housing and education committees. She is a law professor at Cairo University, where she has also been appointed legal counsellor.

Abdel-Sattar, among others, was at the centre of the controversy which erupted this summer after Law 93 of 1995, which stiffened penalties for publication offences, was rammed through parliament. The Press Syndicate reacted by deciding to withhold the publication of her picture or stories about her. On the issue of the press, Abdel-Sattar says that while both sides are entitled to their points of view, it is parliament which has the final say. She insists that "journalists who work within the legal and constitutional boundaries have nothing to fear".

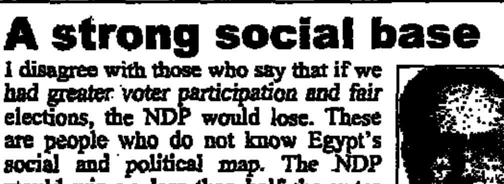
In the past Abdel-Sattar initiated a fruitful five-year campaign for the establishment of private universities in Egypt, and her interest in women's issues led her to lobby for the appointment of women judges and *omda*s (village heads) and the simplification of procedures in the personal status law. Abdel-Sattar's last official trip abroad was as member of the Egyptian parliamentary delegation to the Beijing women's conference.

Born in Alexandria in 1931, Abdel-Sattar received a law degree from Cairo University in 1957 and a PhD in criminal law in 1967. In the same year she began lecturing in criminal law at Cairo University and is registered as a lawyer with the Court of Cassation. In 1990 Abdel-Sattar was the first woman to become legal counsellor to Cairo University.

Five years earlier Abdel-Sattar had joined the NDP and become a member of the party's woman, housing, education and legislative committees. In 1987 she was appointed to parliament and became chair of the legislative committee in 1990.

Independent political experts, interviewed by the *Weekly*, assess NDP performance, and come up with diverse conclusions

A government body



I do not believe that the National Democratic Party is an independent entity. Since it did not come to power through the ballot box but was created by presidential decree, it is rather an extension of the government body. It did not crystallise around an ideology or line of thought and therefore does not constitute a party created and elected by the country's citizens. It is just a group of people whose lifeline comes from government influence and backing. The NDP is more about the government, self-interest and privileges than about representation of the people.

The NDP has not left an impression on the political arena, is deficient in political leaders and lacks true popular backing. The party does not provide public services such as eradicating illiteracy, providing family planning or medical care. Even during natural disasters, other political parties were more active than the NDP.

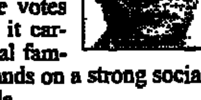
Because of its dependence on the government's resources and backing, the NDP has not produced any political leaders — none that people feel are charismatic, good orators or natural leaders. There may be many professional cadres within the party, but none has the ability to lead the people, and none has tried. The only way NDP candidates can build an electoral base is through the use of government resources — granting favours to influential members of society, who in turn rally the voters behind them.

Even when NDP candidates win elections, it is not known whether they won because of NDP, or government, popularity, since there is no defining line between the two.

To gain legitimacy and credibility as a political party, the NDP should cease to be chaired by the president of the republic. Then the privileges the NDP receives from the government and the resources which are at its disposal would be eliminated, forcing it to compete on an equal footing with the other parties.

Hassan Nafaa
political science professor
Cairo University

A strong social base



I disagree with those who say that if we had greater voter participation and fair elections, the NDP would lose. These are people who do not know Egypt's social and political map. The NDP would win no less than half the votes because of the electoral weight it carries through a lobby of influential families. In that respect, the NDP stands on a strong social base, especially in the countryside.

The NDP is the institutional embodiment of the governing elite which has ruled Egypt since 1952, the child of Egypt's revolutionary political heritage. It is an extension of the past regimes and one finds that cadres in the NDP have at one point served on the Liberation Committee, the National Union and the Arab Socialist Union.

The NDP is merged to a great extent with the central government on the national, ministerial, provincial and local levels. So much so that the NDP sometimes appears to be the government, and indeed, the government takes on the guise of the party during elections.

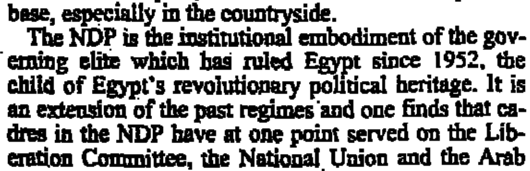
The party's fatal flaw is its inability to renew itself. It does not develop and advance itself or generate new faces. Even when new, young faces appear in the NDP arena, their mentality is similar to that of the older generation, hence there is no improvement.

Nonetheless, this is true of all parties, not just the NDP. Political parties in Egypt are alike in their weaknesses and deficiencies despite their ideological differences.

When all is said, I believe it is more important that the country advances, even if it's at the expense of complete democracy. This is most relevant at a time like the present when public opinion and opposition parties in Egypt are weak.

Osama El-Ghazali Harb
editor-in-chief of Al Ahram's
Al-Siyassa Al-Dawliya [International Politics]

One-party mentality



The NDP must disconnect itself from the government and restructure itself to become more independent and self-reliant. The main problem with the NDP is that it thrives on the mentality of the one-party system, which in turn affects its performance in Egyptian political life. This is due to the integration of the NDP and the government.

For example, in a multi-party system, local government should be independent, but here the majority of governors are in fact an arm of the NDP's mechanism, especially during election campaigns. Governorate facilities are used for the benefit of NDP candidates. The party's dependence on outside help does not encourage it to develop and improve its performance in politics.

When the majority party conducts itself in this manner, it results in stagnation, and the more dependent the NDP is, the more static political life becomes.

During this year's election campaign all parties will focus on local interests and their own interests. This trend was set by the NDP in 1990 when the major opposition parties boycotted the elections, and now they are forced to play by NDP-imposed rules, unable to alter or challenge them.

In general elections, prominence should be given to an overall political agenda, but the NDP's structure, mechanism and style champion provincial politics. When general elections are conducted on such a local level, the chances for democratic development are obliterated. Neither the NDP nor opposition parties are working to bring about this development. The NDP is satisfied with the benefits it receives from governmental bodies and the opposition does not understand that change has to be gradual.

Wahid Abdel-Meguid
expert at Al-Ahram Centre
for Political and Strategic Studies

Determined to win

Kamal El-Shazli is a veteran politician who has occupied a parliamentary seat for a record period — from 1964 until the present. During this time, he has been a leading member of all ruling political parties in succession. In the late 1960s, he was chosen to serve as the local secretary-general of the Arab Socialist Union — then the nation's sole political party — in the Governorate of Menoufiya.

When President Anwar El-Sadat allowed the establishment of Al-Manaber (political forums) in 1976 as a step toward a multi-party system, El-Shazli joined the "centre forum" which later became the Arab Socialist Misr Party, led by then Prime Minister Mamdouh Salem. Two years later, El-Shazli was one of about 250 personalities who quit the Misr Party to join the National Democratic Party (NDP) upon its establishment by Sadat.

In the same year, 1978, he was appointed by Sadat as the NDP's assistant secretary-general and also secretary for organisational affairs, a post which he still occupies today.

In 1993, he joined the cabinet for the first time, as minister of state for parliamentary affairs. In the following interview with Al-Ahram Weekly, *El-Shazli speaks about the NDP's plans for the parliamentary elections*

What preparations are the NDP making for the approaching elections, and what does the party's list of candidates look like?

It was only recently that the NDP's general secretariat completed the examination of all requests for nomination submitted by NDP members to the party's local secretariats in all 26 governorates. Because we received so many requests, we decided to submit the final list, which included more than one candidate for some seats, to President Mubarak so that he may take the final decision.

The NDP's final list includes 444 candidates contesting seats in the nation's 222 constituencies, demonstrating our determination to win a vast majority in the next parliament.

Between 40 and 45 per cent of the names on the NDP list are not members of the outgoing People's Assembly. This is a policy which we began enforcing in the 1987 elections, when newcomers amounted to 50 per cent of candidates, and in 1990 elections, when they amounted to 68 per cent.

The criteria for choosing NDP candidates are a good reputation, hard work and commitment to the party. Members of the outgoing Assembly who are running for re-election were chosen on the basis of their record — the services they extended to their constituents and, more importantly, their effective participation in parliamentary debates and the legislative process.

In previous elections, numerous NDP members who were not nominated by the party ran as independents against official NDP candidates, and managed to win seats in parliament. Yet the NDP has re-accepted them into parliamentary ranks. How do you explain this apparent contradiction?

Let us recall the NDP's conduct in the recent *Shura* Council elections. In these elections, those who violated party commitment were dismissed from the party. Let me emphasise that this is a basic rule that will be strictly applied in the coming parliamentary elections. I hope that all NDP members will observe this rule; whoever runs independently or outside the party's framework will lose membership.

Some reports suggest that the delay in releasing the NDP list was due to differences over the nomination of cabinet ministers and also to disagreements between governors and the NDP's local secretariats on the choice of candidates. Is this true?

As for the nomination of ministers, we already have eight ministers who have seats on the *Shura* Council; 12 others expressed the wish to run in the coming parliamentary elections.

We decided to leave the matter in President Mubarak's hands. The same applies to differences between governors and the local NDP secretariats.

With many businessmen running for election, money is expected to play a major role in the election battle. What is your assessment?

It is true that some businessmen believe that money could swing things in their favour, but my personal conviction is that money can only play a very limited role. In the recent *Shura* Council elections, some businessmen spent millions of pounds and yet failed. On the NDP list we have businessmen with good reputations. The criteria for choosing them was the contribution they made to launching development projects that help reduce unemployment.

NDP opponents claim the party has failed to fill the political vacuum either because it failed to devise new strategies for dealing with Egypt's problems or because it did not raise a new generation of political cardres?

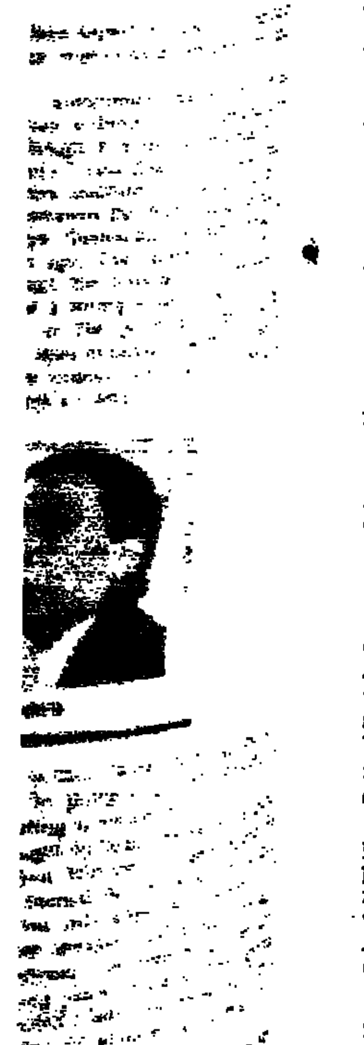
It is common knowledge that political parties throughout the world are based on a principal political figure and a clear ideology that is reflected in the party's programme of action. Over the last 17 years, NDP membership rose from around 7,000 in 1978 to a million in 1992 and then to around three million in 1995.

To me, this increase is due to the fact that the NDP represents the centrist ideology which is the mainstream in Egyptian politics. Egyptian society is in favour of this ideology because it rejects extremism either to the left or the right.

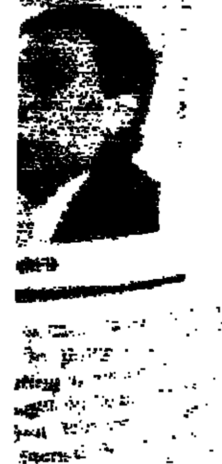
However, this does not mean that viewpoints are not varied or diverse inside the NDP. In fact, this centrist ideology brackets the centre, right and left of centre and this has been clearly reflected in many parliamentary debates.

I concede that the NDP has not been able to fill the political vacuum in some sectors, especially in the professional syndicates. But we have made preparations for strong election campaigns in these syndicates while raising a new generation of young people well versed in all aspects of political action.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**







Fiscal Follies

ACCORDING to a thesis submitted to Ain Sham University's Faculty of Commerce, the surge in unemployment can be traced *back to the monetary and fiscal policies adopted under Egypt's* economic reform programme. Central Bank figures reveal that over the last 12 years, unemployment has increased to reach 10 per cent in 1993/94.

The thesis, which was written by researcher Mahmoud El-Kassas, argues that the unemployment rates cited by the Central Bank do not reflect the level of "disguised unemployment" or redundant labour which account for nearly 20 per cent of the total labour force.

El-Kassas went on to note that the implemented economic reforms failed to halt the increase in unemployment, which has doubled *since 1982. Bank resources were diverted to purchase* treasury bills and finance the state budget instead of financing investment projects.

To make a bad situation worse, El-Kassas argued, the government adopted strict fiscal policies which are based on increasing the state's budget revenue through taxation and tariffs amd charges on investments.

A more feasible policy, El-Kassas maintained, would dictate that the government reduce the budget expenditure by minimising the operating costs, and number, of government offices and ministries while accelerating the privatising of loss-making public sector enterprises. He also recommended that the deficit be financed through treasury bonds in order to avoid accumulating internal debt in the future.

The government, he noted, has decreased the inflation rate at the cost of increasing unemployment. However, by more prudently managing fiscal and monetary policies, the budget deficit could have been lowered without increasing unemployment.

He advised that the government should not impose new taxes, but should lower the tariffs and charges on investment projects. In order to reverse the import-export scales in favour of an export-based economy, he pointed out that the government should pursue an integrated strategy which concentrates on Egypt's most competitive industries. Attention should also be focused on the positive role small industry can play in economic development.

Fruit Symposium

AN EGYPTIAN-French symposium, entitled Fruit and Vegetable Production, was held in Cairo last week under the auspices of the French Embassy's Commercial Office, in cooperation with the French Economic, Industrial and Technical Cooperation Agency.

The symposium, which was inaugurated by Yousef Wali, the minister of agriculture and land reclamation, Ibrahim Fawzy, the minister of industry and mining resources and Ahmed El-Goueli, the minister of supply and home trade, focused on means of cooperation and the sharing of experience between both countries in the fields of market structure organisation and packaging of fresh fruits and vegetables. Other discussions addressed the processing of fruits and vegetables as well as pesticide usage and environmental protection.

The French side was represented by Patrick Le Clerc, the French ambassador to Egypt, representatives of the French Agriculture Ministry and French chambers of commerce in Middle Eastern countries.

As a sideline to the symposium, meetings between corporate *representatives from both countries were held to discuss the po*tential areas of cooperation and partnership.

Turkish business

A TURKISH delegation comprising 60 businessmen traveled to Alexandria last week for a meeting with their Egyptian counterparts. Over the course of their three day visit, the businessmen, who represent various industries such as textiles, contracting, agri-business and automotive, also met with members of the Egyptian Businessmen's Association in Cairo. Talks revolved around the potential for cooperation in trade and industry.

The population of both countries, approaching 60 million each, makes them fertile ground for expanding industrial and service sector ties.

Countdown to Amman (1)

Modest goals, not grand designs

In a series of interviews ahead of the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit in Amman 29 October-1 November, Egyptian businessmen and officials speak with **Ghada Ragab** about their expectations for the conference and the future of regional economic cooperation

Sherif Delawer, a board member of the Alexandria Businessmen's Association, is also a board member of the State Holding Company for Chemical Industries, one of the entities which legally owns and supervises the public sector during the transitional phase of privatisation. He is also chairman of his own business, Advanced Construction Systems.

Participating in preparations for the Amman conference, Delawer says he hopes that by embracing more realistic expectations, regional players will help make Amman a success.

During the past year, what has been achieved by the Casablanca conference?

Although it had no concrete economic achievements, Casablanca gave political legitimacy to regional cooperation *through the political* sponsorship and the wide promotion which it received. The barriers were broken down, and business people who felt they could not enter into regional projects got the political green *light to do so.*

The Amman summit, meanwhile, is about promoting public-private partnership in the region. It will be smaller, more focused and more oriented towards mobilising the private *sector.*

In Amman we are aiming at setting up four regional institutions: a business council to promote trade and investment, a tourism board to market tourism projects, an executive sec*retariat to advance public-*private partnership and a development bank. The bank will have a capital of $5 billion, of which a quarter will be paid up. It aims at attracting private funds which fled the region after finding no appropriate investment opportunities, as well as public funds from international financial institutions and donor countries.

If we are able to establish these institutions, we can say that the Casablanca conference paved the way for this success. If Amman fails to establish these organisations, both Amman and Casablanca will have been failures and the past year will have been wasted.

Last year in Casablanca, Israel *presented a book full of* large-scale projects, do you think these regional projects are now feasible?

Casablanca was more of a show for grandiose projects than a springboard for regional cooperation.

The Amman summit is more modest, more down to earth. There is no place in Amman for the large-scale projects which were presented in Casablanca, but real projects, which need reasonable financing and in which the private sector can participate. Egypt is presenting feasible projects which can eas*ily be implemented, and which* can find the appropriate financing.

One of the very important subjects, which is not on the agenda, but which I hope Egypt will bring up during the dis*cussions is the problem of un*employment in the region. We have to think of middle and small size projects which will create job opportunities so that we can create stability in the region. Such stability would be *felt not only by the business* community but by the man in the street as well.

The main criticism which was directed against Casablanca and which is coming up again *these days* is that these conferences are taking place in the absence of a comprehensive peace.

Amman is only a step. Full peace has not been established in the region. Not all parties are enthusiastic about regional cooperation, and this is why we should not pin too much hope on Amman.

For example, until now the Jordanian private sector does not want to go into regional cooperation. They say about 60 per cent of their business is with Syria and Iraq. Therefore the Jordanians are very sceptical about the future of economic cooperation because it would threaten their economic interest with countries which have not entered into the peace process *such as Syria and Iraq.* So I don't expect them to be very enthusiastic about the conference although it is being held in their own country.

During negotiations in Cairo with the Israeli, Palestinian, and the US delegations, the Jordanian delegation refused the establishment of a business council. This prompted the Egyptian delegation to ask them why they were holding the conference in Amman if they were not ready for regional cooperation.

However, the Jordanian government itself is taking a very *positive position on regional* development.

We are still trying to reach agreement on a number of other points. For example, the Israeli business sector demanded that governments be repre*sented in the regional business* council, but Egypt said it preferred that it be limited to the business community. The compromise we have reached is that government representatives will be invited to *participate in the deliberations* of the coucil's board of governors in a non-voting capacity. At the same time, the European Union and the Arab Gulf states are still sceptical about the regional development bank.

In this context, are the Egyptian government and private sector in agreement on the objectives of the Amman conference?

The Egyptian business and government *delegations* to Amman are in full harmony and speak the same language. The Egyptian position is clear: we are going to Amman to lay the foundations of regional cooperation. However, we are quite aware that any further steps hinge on the establishment of a comprehensive peace in the region.

What is your assessment of the level of coordination between the government and the private sector for the Amman *conference?*

The coordination which is taking place through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the past three months has been excellent. We have discussed in depth all the points which Egypt will bring up at the conference. The government has asked the business organisations to specify the projects they will be offering, and Egypt will present a unified catalogue citing the projects.

The meetings were attended by representatives of all business organizsations: the Federation of Egyptian Industries, the *Federation of the Chambers of* Commerce, the Egyptian Businessmen's Association and the Alexandria Businessmen's Association.

What are the projects that *Egypt will present at the conference?*

All the projects we are discussing are those of a regional nature. There is one large and very important tourism project called the "Riviera" in the *Taba/Eilat/Aqaba triangle.* There is also the electric power network in the same area. All these projects include the private sector. The concept of the Amman summit is public-private partnership, and the role *of the public and private sectors* in regional projects.

The Egyptian role is not only to present projects, but also to oppose the establishment of projects which could contradict the interests of the Egyptian economy. *Other* parties to the conference could establish projects which could, for instance, harm the interests of the Suez Canal, or affect the Egyptian supply of natural gas to Israel.

How can Egypt *stand against* the establishment of any regional projects which might contradict its interests?

The Egyptians are very much *alert to the fact* that other parties could establish projects which contradict Egypt's interests. Although we cannot prevent them from doing so, we can, however, try to enter into these projects as a partner, or make counterproposals. This is where the alertness of the Egyptian negotiator comes in. We are well prepared and we understand the rules of the game.

***In view of Israel's activity in* the region during the past year, how much of an economic threat does Israel pose to Egypt?**

We are more active than Israel, but we do not advertise *our actions as well as they do. I* believe that regional cooperation does not scare Egypt, but, it does scare Israel.

Israel is a country in which 70 per cent of the industry is in the hands of the government or *the trade unions. They have no* clear programme for privatisation, while one of the main aims of the Amman conference is to promote privatisation and the role of the private sector. They have no programme to attract *foreign* or Arab investments. They are not likely to initiate such a programme when comprehensive regional cooperation starts, because Israel by its very nature is a closed country, since it is based on religion.

Such a country cannot easily open its borders to regional cooperation. It wants only limited regional cooperation to the extent that would serve its direct interests. Israel wants water; it wants *funds*, but it does not want Arab investors. It needs strong trade relations to market its goods, especially with the *Arab* Gulf states, mainly through the multinationals.

The prospect of Arab capital in Israeli industrial projects and the capital *market* frightens Israel, because it is a closed society. They are not ready to participate in the *free movement* of labour with neighbouring Arab states. Israel would be directly harmed by integrating with the Arab states in an exchange that it fears could obliterate its identity. Meanwhile, Egypt is not afraid of regional cooperation. We have relative advantages and are able to compete.

How can Egypt compete with the more advanced Israeli technology? And how can we deal with the fact that Israel is now upgrading its industries by exporting the less sophisticated, labour-intensive industries to the Arab states?

The dynamics of the movement of industry from one place to another happen everyday everywhere in the world. Once again we are not afraid; we have the means and the human resources.

Israel is not a threat. Sophisticated technology exists everywhere in the world. Israel may be ahead of us in the field of planning, but then if we lag behind what is happening around us, the whole world is a potential threat.

If we are *not* ready, a partnership with Europe could be more dangerous than Israel. We have to have a vision for the future — a vision of Egypt within a global economic village, or else opening our borders with anybody will be a threat.

Partners in time?

To sign, or not to sign, that is the question surrounding the yet-to-be established EU-Egypt partnership agreement, but for **Mona Qassem**, several issues must first be addressed

Negotiations for the establishment of a free trade area, which includes the European Union (EU) and 10 southern Mediterranean nations, by the *year 2010, are going strong.* As part of the talks on the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Zone, the EU and Egypt are currently discussing the establishment of another free trade area which will further increase the trade relations between the two parties.

In the most general of terms, this partnership agreement seeks to put into place the conditions necessary for free trade in goods, service and capital; to promote economic and social ties between Egypt and the EU; and to encourage regional cooperation aimed at promoting economic and political stability. It also aims at encouraging cooperation in all other fields of common interest while seeking to establish a political dialogue which will *strengthen bilateral relations.*

While in principle Egypt has embraced the idea of strengthening relations with Europe, lingering doubts about guarantees for the country's infant industries and its service sector have left the final agreement yet to be concluded.

For its part, Egypt is push*ing for favourable terms* which will help industries develop their operations and better handle the increased competition. To reach this end, Egyptian negotiators, for example, are demanding an extension of the transitional period to 15 years. The EU had proposed a 12-year period. The added time would give local industries more of a chance to adapt their operations.

In addition, Egypt is calling for more financial assistance *in order to further economic* growth and increase the competitiveness of the country's service and industrial sectors.

While three rounds of negotiations have been concluded, and the fourth is scheduled for October, the potential effects of this partnership on the Egyptian economy are already *becoming obvious.*

The agreement will allow Egyptian products free access to Europe's burgeoning markets. This, in turn, will encourage production and increase investments. But for this prediction to become a reality, several conditions must be stipulated in the agreement. One of the main concerns voiced by the industrial lobby groups is that Europe will deny entry to Egyptian products under the pretext that they are substandard. To over*come this potential obstacle,* both sides must agree on issues such as the rules of origin, environmental and industrial standards, resolving tax and customs-related problems and clarifying the defining criteria for anti-dumping and other non-tariff measures against imports.

But to clarify the Egyptian position to the EU, negotiators should elaborate on the assessment of how such an agreement could affect Egypt's economy. This assessment should anticipate the impact of the agreement on investment and production levels as well as on the job market and customs revenues.

Moreover, production sector representatives must offer suggestions on the length of the transitional period, measures needed to upgrade local *industries and the kind of sup*port which local producers require to remain competitive.

To ensure that Egypt derives the maximum benefit from the agreement, the second stage of the economic reform programme must be enacted more expediently. This stage is concerned with pro*ductive reform and removing* all obstacles hindering industrial development.

On parallel lines, legislative bodies should review investment, labour, tax, social insurance, and capital market laws for the free trade area to be successful, while also embracing administrative reforms.

Market report

Three times the charm

The general market index

(Chart: vertical axis 212.0, 212.5, 213.0, 213.5, 214.0, 214.5, 215.0; horizontal axis 1/10/95, 2/10/95, 3/10/95, 4/10/95, 5/10/95)

THE GENERAL Market Index continued on its upswing, topping off at 214.26 points for the week *ending 5 October. In what was seen by* many as a remarkable surge in trading, LE150.2 million in shares exchanged hands. Last week only LE57.8 million in shares were traded.

The manufacturing sector's index rose 6.47 points to close at 300.77, as shares of the Portland Torah Cement Company gained LE3.92 per share to level off at *LE47.5* per share. Shares of the North Cairo Mills Company gained LE2 per share to close at LE57. Egypt Sponge Company also absorbed an increase, with its shares increasing by LE0.65 per share to close at LE71.65. The week's big manufacturing sector winner was the National Baraka Iron and Steel Company which captured the *largest* share of market transactions. In 98.14 per cent of the total market transactions, it traded LE21.74 million in shares, which gained LE0.41 to close at LE3.42 per share.

Other companies were not so blessed. Am*eriya Cement Company shares fell by LE2 per* share to reach LE52 per share, while those of El-Nasr Clothing and Textiles Company (Kabo) dropped by LE4 per share to close at LE166. Abu Kir Fertiliser and Chemical Industries Company slipped by LE1.93 per share to level off at LE46.08.

The index for the financial sector also increased, rising by a modest 0.59 points to close at 181.29 points. El-Mohandes Bank's shares recorded the greatest increase in value. They shot up by 42 per cent to close at LE14.20. Shares of the Commercial International Bank (CIB) gained LE1.50 per share to reach LE528 per share. However, Misr International Bank shares lost LE9 per share to level at LE260 per share, while those of El-Watany Bank fell by LE8.59 to close at LE29.25.

Legislative revolutions

MINISTER of Public Sector and Administrative Reform Atef Ebeid, speaking at a seminar on Egypt's reform programme organised by Cairo University's Public Administration Research and Consultation Centre, said that Egypt's dated laws are in need of an overhaul.

*"Egypt needs a legislative rev*olution. We have 55,000 laws, some of which date back to 1860. This complicates dealings between investors and official agencies," Ebeid said, adding that the government has started to wade through the existing laws.

Pointing to the significant changes which have confronted Egypt and other developing countries over the past 15 years, such as the global trend towards market economies, the implementation of GATT and the emergence of Southeast Asia's "tigers" as an economic power, Ebeid asserted that it is necessary for developing countries to reform the economic environment as a whole by curbing inflation and lifting restrictions on competitiveness. In addition, he noted, public investments should be placed under private management.

To upgrade public services, which are offered free of charge, Ebeid suggested that these services be operated on a cost-recovery basis.

He also stressed the importance *of ready access to data which can* be used to aid the economic reform programme.

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

'Peace protected by force'

On the eve of a visit to the United States, Defence Minister Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi spoke to Galal Nassar, **discussing his talks in Washington, the situation along the border with Sudan, the approaching Bright Star exercise and Egyptian efforts to upgrade its armed forces**



photo: Tony Fares

You have paid visits to several states in the East and West, including the United States, China and Pakistan, for military talks. What does Egypt stand to gain from these visits?

We in the armed forces are intent on keeping abreast with the latest advances in military science and armament technology. There is no doubt that these visits contribute greatly to promoting cooperation and coordination with these states, thus fulfilling the needs of our armed forces and giving a boost to our military industry.

As a result of this cooperation, our armed forces have made numerous gains. These include both the acquisition of new armaments, and cooperation in the manufacture of new armaments, such as warplanes, battle tanks, air defence equipment, automatic control and command systems and electronic warfare equipment.

We also gain from the military expertise of these states, particularly the United States, by sending our officers for advanced studies in their military institutes.

What about your forthcoming visit to the US this month? It has been said that your talks in Washington will focus on military aid to Egypt and the acquisition of new weapons either on easy credit terms or from the American military surplus. Is this true?

Egyptian-American military relations have assumed new dimensions and new forms following the 1973 War, when the United States realised that Egypt had credibility, whether in war or peace, and that its regional role could not be ignored.

These relations, which are beneficial to the interests of the two countries, are now pivotal in their policies and strategies. There is no doubt that American military aid to Egypt is a bulwark for our objective of raising the combat efficiency of our armed forces.

This aid takes the form of an annual grant, joint exercises and continuous coordination and has reached an apex with the joint production of the ultra-modern M1A1 battle tank.

For its part, the United States, convinced of the credibility of Egyptian policy and its wise approach to regional and international problems, is seeking to realise stability and balance in this region which has great importance for the whole world and the United States in particular.

Egypt, for its part, seeks to benefit from this relationship by acquiring new expertise and advanced technology and building up an advanced military industry. Egyptian-American military cooperation has scored great successes during the past years and we are intent on promoting this cooperation further. Consequently, we expect that these relations will develop further, both in its form and its extent, to serve regional peace and stability, as well as the *common national objectives of the two countries.*

As for my visit to the United States, I was invited by my dear friend, Defence Secretary William Perry, during his visit to Egypt in January 1995. The purpose is to follow up the meetings of a military coordination committee and work together to implement its recommendations. This visit will be a meeting of friends because we are intent on affirming the bonds of friendship and also on working together for world peace, security and prosperity.

The US Congress has issued a report criticising the high cost of the assembly of the M1A1 battletank in Egypt and recommending that the assembly lines be converted for the production of armoured vehicles or tractors. What is your response and what are the future prospects of this project?

It is natural that the cost would be high in the early stages of production. This had been anticipated before launching such a major industrial project, and yet the armed forces decided to go ahead with the project.

The assembly lines do not only produce the M1A1 tank but undertake the repairs of this tank as well as the M1A2 tank which is in service in some states of the region. They can also be used in manufacturing or modernising heavy mechanical equipment.

Feasibility studies are underway to develop the assembly lines to turn out new products that can be exported. The boost this project gave to the Egyptian military industry outweighs the high cost.

It is expected that this project will generate revenue by marketing its products, such as M1A1 parts, and its services, to the states of the Middle East.

Egypt recently received F-16 jetfighters assembled in Turkey, and it has been said that Egypt manufactures parts for these warplanes. Is this true, and does the Egyptian air force plan to acquire even more advanced warplanes such as the F-15 or the F-18?

The acquisition of the latest types of warplanes is one of the major objectives of our air force and this has been *accomplished in cooperation with friendly countries* such as the United States, France and China.

Egypt recently received a number of American F-16 jetfighters. In view of the proximity of Turkey, and as part of the growing cooperation between Turkey and Egypt, the planes were assembled in Turkey, according to American specifications.

As a result of the great confidence the American side has in the Egyptian military industry, our factories are now manufacturing parts for advanced American warplanes such as the F-16.

At present, Egypt is cooperating with friendly countries in the manufacture of warplanes, and light aircraft such as the Helwan and Gomhouriya have been produced.

The Egyptian Air Force has an arsenal of modern warplanes capable of securing Egyptian air space. There is no doubt that other types of warplanes, despite their high combat efficiency, would not constitute a significant addition to the combat capability of the Egyptian Air Force.

Egypt recently staged joint naval manoeuvres with friendly countries in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Will there be more exercises in the future and what plans are being made for modernising the naval forces?

The armed forces believe in the importance and necessity of staging joint exercises with sister and friendly states as a means of exchanging expertise and becoming acquainted with the modern armaments they possess. These exercises have contributed to raising the combat efficiency of our naval forces. They also laid the groundwork for cooperation between our forces and these friendly countries in protecting vital interests in the Red Sea and Mediterranean.

Within the framework of joint cooperation with friendly countries, preparations are being made for the Bright Star 95 exercise which will be staged in November and will involve a number of friendly Arab and foreign states.

The importance of joint training was apparent during the Kuwait liberation war because it facilitated the coordination of combat operations.

As for modernising the naval forces, and despite the exorbitant cost, the general command of the armed forces is making major efforts to meet the requirements of the naval forces whether by modernising armaments already in our possession or acquiring new arms and technology.

There is no doubt that the Egyptian naval forces, with their great combat ability and expertise, have a prominent position among the states of the region. Cooperation between the naval forces and other sectors of the armed forces is also essential in modern warfare, with air defence forces protecting the naval pieces.

How is the Egyptian military industry faring and what plans are being made to develop it further?

At first the military industry partially manufactured some types of ammunition for mortars and artillery, but now it fully manufactures all types of ammunition, whether eastern or western, already in service, as well as all types of small and medium weapons.

They also participate in the partial manufacture of heavy equipment and weapons such as the M1A1 tank, the 122mm howitzers, [infrared] optical equipment as well as the jeeps now in service with the American army.

This has contributed greatly to fulfilling the needs of the armed forces and realising self-sufficiency in several sectors. There are plans to develop the military industry further in accordance with the needs of our armed forces as well as those of the armed forces of some friendly countries.

Have regional changes led to a change in the Egyptian military strategy and what are the broad lines of this strategy?

The Egyptian military creed is based on achieving "peace that is protected by force". Our concept of peace goes beyond the Egyptian borders to encompass the Arab homeland, within a world where peace and security prevail. The broad lines of Egyptian national strategy include:

— belief in religious values which is offset by opposition to all forms of extremism.

— [Socio-economic] development to realise security and prosperity for the Egyptian people.

— promoting relations with the Arab world and affirming commitment to the charter of the Arab League.

— commitment to peace and peaceful solutions to international problems, although we may resort to armed conflict in a situation which affects national security or to defend our national interests against direct threats.

— participation through regional and international organisations in upholding international legality and maintaining balanced relations with all states of the world.

— commitment to removing all weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East.

What preparations are being made for the Bright Star exercise, and is it true that it will include Arab and Western states in addition to the United States?

Joint exercises are the highest form of training and are greatly beneficial to the participants. Egypt has great expertise in desert warfare and this is why many advanced countries seek to participate in joint exercises with us in order to benefit from our expertise. We also benefit by becoming acquainted with the latest advances in military science and technology.

The Bright Star exercise is held every two years and is one of the largest exercises that take place in the Middle East. It requires joint and thorough planning because each side wants to include certain operations such as dropping paratroopers on land or the sea, the storming of positions, the delivery of air strikes, the confrontation of air strikes etc...

We welcome the participation of any friendly country and, in fact, forces from the United Kingdom, France and the United Arab Emirates in addition to the United States, will take part in Bright Star 95. There will also be observers from Germany, Italy, Turkey and Greece and observers from seven Arab and Islamic states — Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Morocco, Jordan and Pakistan.

While peace prevails in the region, our armed forces are upgrading their *capabilities, focusing on* quality and not quantity, because, as I said, peace needs force to protect it. We need peace for all the states of the world, particularly the states of the region, so that we may devote ourselves to economic development. As long as we are strong and our armed forces have the highest degree of combat efficiency and vigilance, the chances of war, or the threat of war, will be greatly reduced.

What is the situation along the southern border with Sudan in view of the Sudanese claim that *there is a buildup of Egyptian troops seeking to* impose a status quo in the Halayeb-Shalatin triangle? How are we reacting to the Sudanese provocations and what are the services provided by the armed forces to the inhabitants of the triangle?

The Sudanese regime has revived the problem of the Halayeb triangle in order to divert attention from the big problems facing the Sudanese people and the the regime's inability to deal with these problems. The economic situation is deteriorating constantly. The war in the south continues and there are no signs that its end is approaching. And because of its support for and export of terrorism, the Sudanese regime is facing economic and political isolation.



'As long as we are strong and our armed forces have the highest degree of combat efficiency and vigilance, the chances of war, or the threat of war, will be greatly reduced'



Consequently, the Sudanese government revived the Halayeb triangle dispute, but failed to achieve its target. The Sudanese government is turning a blind eye to the Sudanese Constitution of 1953 which clearly states that the 22nd parallel is the borderline between Egypt and Sudan. North of this line, Egyptian border guards are positioned to protect our borders against acts of infiltration and smuggling.

As for the Sudanese provocations, we are stressing the following facts: Sudan is a neighbourly country that has been bound to Egypt throughout history by close relations of a particular nature; the two countries also share common strategic interests; consequently relations between the two countries cannot be affected by any circumstances or contingencies.

For many years, Egypt has made significant contributions to the welfare of the Sudanese people, playing pioneer roles in the fields of education and raising the efficiency of the Sudanese armed forces. Egypt also provided support to the successive government regimes in Khartoum and opened its doors to more than three million Sudanese who are treated like brothers in this country.

And yet, the Sudanese regime has adopted anti-Egyptian policies and positions, which led to unprecedented tension in relations. This happened not only with Egypt but also with other neighbouring states, which led to Sudan's political isolation.

At the core of the present dispute between the two countries is the control exercised by the Islamic National Front and its leader Hassan El-Turabi over the Khartoum regime. This front has embraced an extremist ideology and seeks to destabilise the governments of several states of the region, particularly Egypt. It also harbours terrorists who are provided with training in camps located on Sudanese soil — a matter which constitutes a threat to Egyptian, Arab and African security.

We all know that any threat to the Nile waters not only constitutes a threat to national security, but is also a threat to Egypt's very survival because the Nile is our lifeline.

We affirm that Egypt is intent on maintaining the eternal bonds between the two peoples. But any provocative measures taken by the Sudanese regime against Egypt's national interests may push the situation into an even more dangerous phase. There are red lines, well-known to the Sudanese side. If it attempts to cross these lines, particularly concerning the issues of water and land, it will have to bear the consequences.

As for the services provided by the armed forces to the inhabitants of the triangle, they included the *construction of three water desalination plants* at Bernice, Abu Ramad and south of Halayeb, and the construction of an 82-km-long road in the Halayeb-Shalatin region. A school was built at Abu Ramad and two other schools and 250 housing units are under construction in the region. A military hospital and two medical centres were also established.

The border guards are in charge of protecting our borders and coastlines. What efforts are being made to upgrade these forces?

Securing our borders and coastlines is one of the *principal functions of the armed forces and this* responsibility is discharged with great efficiency by the border guards. They have been provided with radars to detect any hostile movement from a distance, light aircraft for reconnaissance and chase purposes, light vehicles and gunboats to protect the coastlines.

The Israeli disclosures about the heroism of Sayed Zakaria, "the lion of Sinai", have raised the question of whether we will allow Israel to write our military history. When will the Defence Ministry release the documents that contain the truth?

Even before the Israeli disclosures were made, the armed forces had set up a number of committees, which included specialists in the writing of our military history. These committees were commissioned to make field tours of battle sites and meet with large numbers of officers and soldiers who took part in the wars.

We will publish the results of these committees' work in the near future so that the documentation of the military history of that period will be on a par with the sacrifices and heroism displayed by the sons of Egypt in defence of their country.

What sort of protection is provided to the Egyptian peace-keepers in Bosnia and is Egypt ready to take part in international peace-keeping efforts?

It should be pointed out that the Egyptian participation in peace-keeping in Bosnia stems from its belief in the importance of stability in this part of the world and also the importance of cooperation between the states of the Mediterranean; it is also part of the Egyptian commitment to upholding international legality.

The Egyptian force is active under the umbrella of the United Nations, which provides the necessary protection. The Egyptian force carries out the tasks which are assigned to it by the United Nations, after they are discussed and approved by the Egyptian command to ensure the security and safety of our men.

To affirm the Egyptian commitment to world peace and security, Egypt is always prepared to respond to any invitation from the United Nations to participate in any peace-keeping force in any region, provided the United Nations guarantees the security of these forces.

An international conference was held recently in Geneva on landmines and plans for their removal. What are the efforts that are being made by the armed forces for the removal of mines in Egypt?

The conference was held between 5-7 July, with Egyptian participation, to discuss international contributions for the removal of mines from affected countries. The Egyptian delegation explained the problem of the mines planted in the Western Desert during World War II, pointing out that they total 22.7 million mines, thus correcting the United Nations' record on this problem.

Several countries agreed to contribute $21 million to a special fund for the removal of mines. Egypt will only contribute personnel.

The Egyptian armed forces have made major efforts to clear the Western and Sinai deserts of mines and other items left behind after the war. Between 1981 and 1991, the armed forces cleared an area of 775 square kilometres, both in the Western and Sinai deserts, removing about 11 million mines. In mid-1991 the armed forces began enforcing a 15-year plan for clearing 2,095 square kilometres at a cost of LE170 million and $140 million.

An area of 150 square kilometres has been cleared so far. Efforts are continuing to acquire modern detection equipment from developed countries.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**



Free at last — Palestinian prisoner Emad Zakoot embraces his mother following his release on Tuesday from an Israeli jail (photo:AFP)

Conciliatory despite fractured bones

Released after almost four months in detention Hamas spokesperson Mahmoud Zahar, in an interview with **Julie Till**, talks about the chances of an agreement between the Islamic movement and the PNA

Hamas spokesman Mahmoud Zahar was released from jail by order of PLO leader Yasser Arafat on Sunday. Arrested as part of the general crackdown on Hamas by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the wake of a suicide bombing in June of this year, Zahar spent 105 days in detention. In a telephone interview, he spoke to Al-Ahram Weekly *about how his own release and the meeting in Sudan between Hamas members from the Palestinian self-rule areas and the movement's exiled leadership may be the first step towards an agreement with the PNA.*

Why were you released?

I was involved in discussions (with the PNA) from the start. We were at that time about to reach a final agreement between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. They postponed that until now. They released me as a primary step towards reaching a final agreement and reconciliation between the different forces of the Palestinian people.

So I think my release, along with other steps like the meeting in Sudan, is a first step towards intensive negotiations aimed at reaching a final solution to the present problems.

Was your release conditional?

No, I was released without any conditions.

How were you treated in prison?

Badly. Four bones were fractured and one rib. And sixty days in solitary confinement.

Is reconciliation possible between the two sides?

We hope so. It is possible, but it needs mutual courage to push these steps into an active process.

How do you see your own role?

I will be, God willing, very positive. I will put in a lot of effort because I started this process a long time ago. I led the delegates negotiating with the Palestinian Authority from the start, even before its arrival (in the self-rule areas).

Your experience in jail has not changed your mind?

No, my attitude from the start was to achieve reconciliation. Now I know a lot about their bad behaviour. This will be used positively in order to prevent such things and protect our people from such brutality.

Are there any other Hamas members in jail?

I have no clear idea because we have here at least eight separate Palestinian security systems. I was isolated in one of those systems so I have no idea about the actual number of Hamas detainees.

Is an agreement likely to come out of the Sudan meeting between Hamas members from the self-rule areas and the exiled leadership?

No, now no. After they return, delegates from Hamas will come representing the West Bank, Gaza, and the Hamas people outside. These will be the delegates of Hamas. They will meet the delegates of the PLO or the Palestinian Authority and after that we are going to reach an agreement, God willing.

Who will make the final decision? Hamas members in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, or those outside?

Those in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, but we can't ignore the other people.

Does this mean that Hamas is now ready to work within the framework of the Oslo agreements?

No, it doesn't mean we are going to be part of the Oslo agreements, but we are going to take part in the reconstruction of Palestinian society. I think the first step is to create political parties. These parties will participate in creating the democratic system which will ultimately decide to go along with, or abandon the Oslo agreements.

Can you see Hamas turning itself into a political party and participating in elections for the interim self-rule council ?

This is one possibility. [As for the elections], this will be after the establishment of the party.

Do you think Israel will now allow Hamas to run in the elections?

Do you think Israel has the right to decide who can participate in the Palestinian elections? If they say no we are going to say to the people that Israel is now in control of our political system and choosing who is going to represent the Palestinian people. This cannot be accepted by Palestinians.

If Hamas transforms itself into a political party and stops its attacks from the Palestinian self-rule areas, some members may wish to retain the military option...

We are in need of one thing, that is the establishment of a political party. And the Palestinian Authority is in need of an end to military action. We have common problems. We are going to discuss all these problems and find a final solution to every issue.

But how will this affect the unity of Hamas?

Hamas is one unit and everyone is accustomed to obeying the final decision, be it military or political. I do not think this will create any divisions within Hamas. We are one nucleus, very firm and united. We have faced a lot of troubles and up till now we are one unit. I think such divisions are unlikely but we hope, and we are capable of stopping any manifestation of divisions among the ranks of Hamas supporters, God willing.

Ciller clings on

Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller is holding on, despite the collapse of her coalition government, writes **Arshad-uz Zaman** from Ankara

Tansu Ciller, Turkey's first woman prime minister, has managed to stitch together a new minority government following the surprise break-up of the four year old coalition between her True Path Party (DYP) and the Republican People's Party (CHP) two weeks ago. General elections are due a year from now, but the consensus is that elections will probably take place no later than next spring.

In the elections held in 1991 the DYP became the largest party in the parliament with 182 seats. The Motherland Party (ANAF) took second place with 96 seats, and party leader Mesut Yilmaz became leader of the opposition.The CHP with 65 seats came third and formed a coalition with Ciller's party. The pro-Islamic Welfare Party (RP) with 38 seats came fourth. The other seats in the 452 member parliament were shared between mainly right-wing parties and the Democratic Left Party, which won 10 seats.

In spite of the stresses and strains, the coalition led first by Suleyman Demirel (now president) and for the last two years by Tansu Ciller, functioned reasonably smoothly. Both partners made concessions to make the coalition work, but a vocal minority within the CHP campaigned ceaselessly against the coalition. The first order of business for the newly elected leader of the CHP, Deniz Baykal, was thus to decide whether to continue the coalition or not. After a three-hour long meeting with his coalition partner Prime Minister Ciller, Baykal announced, "The coalition has ended, the life of this parliament has ended." His party, he stated, was ready for early elections.

In making this dramatic announcement Baykal took the wind out of the sails of his party's vocal left-wing. His decision has brought his party back to its traditional centre-left voters. By precipitating the break up of the coalition he has also taken a calculated gamble — to make the CHP into the mass party it was in the mid-seventies or face political oblivion.

The break with the centre-right DYP coincides with large-scale labour unrest in the country. The protests are closely linked to Turkey's privatisation programme, demanded by the International Monetary Fund, which has provoked fears over job losses. There are currently 335,000 public sector workers on strike, affecting ports, railways and the sugar beet industry. The only party lending a sympathetic ear to the workers is the CHP and, now that he is out of the government, Baykal will have his hands free.

Even more pressing perhaps is the Kurdish issue. The war in the south-east is the most critical problem facing Turkey. In 11 years of war between the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and Turkish security forces more than 120,000 have died, countless thousands have been injured and the region itself looks like a wasteland.

Kurds are 20 per cent of the Turkish population. Traditionally Kurds have voted for the CHP, including the last elections in 1991. But disappointed by the CHP, they formed their own political party, only to have it subsequently banned by the present government. Several Kurdish members of parliament were also thrown in jail and are now facing trial. The Kurdish community is therefore watching the new leader carefully before throwing their lot in again with the CHP.

Wooing back the Kurdish voters to CHP may be the most difficult and delicate task awaiting Baykal. But there is also a growing awareness among all parties that this question will have to be dealt with in a political way. One of the most interesting features of the next election campaign will be how the political parties tackle this question.

If Baykal is facing difficult choices, the situation of Prime Minister Ciller is not an enviable one either. This economics professor turned politician has faced constant sniping within her own party. The question being asked is whether the DYP will go to the polls with a leader whose political life is barely five years old. At the present moment there does not appear anyone to challenge her leadership, but she will need both skill and luck to carry her through to the elections.

Ciller's True Path Party and the ANAP are two sides of the same coin. The large business community and the thriving middle class are largely supporters of *these two centre-right parties.* Pressure will mount from Turkey's capitalist class for these two parties to mend their fences. As election day draws closer, pressure is bound to mount on both leaders to appear on a single platform. Given the personalities of the two leaders this prospect does not, however, look too bright.

The real unknown is the Welfare Party with its strong Islamic orientation in a country whose constitution is secular. In the municipal polls last year RP made a strong showing. Will it be able to repeat that performance in the general elections? In any case, the party is destined to stir up strong sentiments in this secular state, whose Muslim population is deeply religious.

At the European level, Ciller's coalition crisis has come at a critical time. Turkey's entry into the European Customs Union (CU) is about to be decided. This is an essential first step before it becomes full member of the European Union. In return for admission, Turkey is supposed to continue her process of democratic reforms and to release the six former Kurdish MPs. The European Parliament is due to vote on this issue next December, but there is some concern that the collapse of the coalition government might affect the timing of Turkey's entry into the CU.

The writer is a former Bangladeshi ambassador and assistant secretary-general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

Edited by **Mervat Diab**

Immigrant outrage burns

Last week the outrage in predominantly immigrant suburbs of French cities burned because of the police killing of an Algerian youth. **Faiza Rady** outlines the parametres of institutionalised racism in France

The Paris metro bomb explosion on Friday, 6 October shattered government hopes that the recent mass arrest of alleged Arab suspects would end the terrorist wave. Since 7 July, seven bomb attacks have caused the death of seven people and the injury of more than 130. After last Friday's explosion of a gas canister bomb in the city's southern 13th district, 13 people were slightly wounded. "The nightmare has started again," lamented *Le Parisien*, a widely read tabloid. Yet the "nightmare" may very well have been triggered by the country's institutionalised racism, which is disrupting the daily lives of millions of people from Africa and the Middle East.

Since successive centre-right and socialist governments adopted neo-liberal economic policies, unemployment rates have soared in France. Currently, three million people are unemployed and poverty has become a permanent feature of many working class neighbourhoods. More than 500 urban districts, where youth unemployment levels for the 20- to 24-year-old age bracket are 24 per cent for men and 30 per cent for women, are considered high-risk areas. Deep-seated social problems related to drug trafficking, juvenile delinquency and street crime have destabilised life in these sprawling ghettos. Although such conditions have been studied and analysed *ad nauseam*, various governments have failed to address their underlying economic roots.

Instead, politicians, ranging from the extreme right to the left, have made immigrant workers and foreign refugees scapegoats for the prevailing ills, conveniently blaming them for poverty, unemployment and crime. As a result, the French parliament passed new immigration laws which seriously compromise foreign residents' rights, while the far right has intensified its violent attacks on communities from the South. Nevertheless, discriminatory legislation and a racist social climate are not the exclusive property of the French. The same pattern has spread all over the European continent, where people of African and Arab descent are particularly targeted.

"The French people grant the right of asylum to foreigners banished from their country for the cause of liberty," reads the revolutionary French Constitution — dating back to 1793. Two centuries later, in May 1990, a ministerial committee defined the new policy of expelling political refugees: "Our aim is to double the number of repatriation cases." The then Socialist Prime Minister Michel Rocard, euphemistically explained his government's position: "We cannot give shelter to all of the world's poor." Accordingly, in December 1991, Socialist deputies joined ranks with the extreme right — Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front (FN) — and voted to henceforth detain political asylum seekers in the transit areas. After the vote, the FN's general delegate, Bruno Megret, sarcastically applauded the government's position which coincided with his party's programme on immigration. "Are the Socialist government's policies now aligned with those of Vichy [a standard comparison between the FN and the Nazi shadow government during World War II], or were the FN's positions unfairly denigrated?" he asked. Unabashed by the unwholesome coalition with an extremist party, the left — both socialist and communist — continued its onslaught against immigrant workers' rights.

In April 1993, Pierre Cardo, mayor of Chanteloup-les-Vignes (Union for French Democracy or UDF, centre right), proposed cancelling the social security benefits of foreign families with juvenile delinquents. Not to be outdone by his colleague from the right, Roland Plaisance, the communist mayor of Evreux, then announced that he had already cancelled the food stamp allocations of foreigners known to have "problem" children. It goes without saying that the mayor's decision constituted an illegal act of private vigilantism since the constitution grants equal rights to all residents, regardless of citizenship. Similar patterns of administrative vigilantism abound. In the autumn of 1992, the municipal council of Clichy-sur-Bois refused to hand foreign workers their social security request forms. At the bureaucratic level everything is done to harass immigrants and deny their most legitimate demands. Family reunification requests are especially targeted.

Le Monde Diplomatique (May 1993) quotes Jacques Chirac as saying at a banquet on 19 June 1991 that "Our problems are caused by an *overdose* of foreigners." He added, "It may be true that their numbers haven't increased since pre-war times, but they aren't the *same* and that makes the difference. It is clear that Spanish, Polish and Portuguese workers cause us less problems than *Muslims* or *blacks*."

One such 'problematic' Muslim was a North African youth who wanted to join his father, an immigrant worker living in Creil. Although the paper work was processed in due form and the son qualified for a visa, city hall illegally withheld his residence permit. In a letter dated 6 July 1992, the mayor's office complacently denied the request because "the youth would certainly face adjustment problems in the neighbourhood".

Since the enforcement of the 1993 immigration and naturalisation laws, many people have been pushed into a Kafkaesque underground existence. Until 1986 people could enter the country without a visa, and until 1993 children born in France would automatically qualify for citizenship. Yet, the new immigration code disqualifies foreigners with no visas, including those who entered the country before 1986, from legalising their status. Consequently, people who arrived legally, lived and worked in the country for at least a decade and are the parents of French children, are denied residence and work papers. The law now forces people to go underground and become clandestine, if they are to survive. This was true for six men: two Ivory Coast nationals, a Senegalese, a Malian, a Peruvian and an Egyptian. On 11 April 1995, desperate and unable to legalise their status, they decided to go on a hunger strike — which was to last for four weeks. It was only after the media dramatised their story and Danielle Mitterrand intervened personally that the men's problem was finally resolved. But this remained a token gesture; thousands of similar cases are still pending, with no solution in sight.

An oppressive climate of administrative suspicion prevails, extending to ordinary citizens, who are urged to become police informants. City hall and police department clerks, mayors, social workers, school principals, post office and social security workers are all encouraged to join the witch hunt. Farid Merabet, a member of *Droit de cité*, a citizens' rights group, bitterly comments, "For the average person, immigrants are political Islamists; for the businesswoman or man, they are delinquents; for the police, they are illegal." Jean-Pierre Aulax of the Information and Support Group of Immigrant Workers adds, "Racism is now admissible; it has been rationalised."

The prevailing climate has triggered widespread attacks against immigrants all over the continent. In Germany alone, 7,680 acts of racially motivated assaults occurred in 1992-93 and 25 people were murdered. While the media and most politicians marginalise such crimes by relating them to aberrant acts of crazed individuals, German President Richard Weizsacker came closer to speaking the truth. "These criminals don't just fall from the sky. Their acts result from a racist ambiance ... and violence is now politically motivated," he said at the 3 June 1993 service held in Cologne to honour the memory of five Turkish victims.

As always, police violence is the most chilling. Salim Hadjedj, an 18-year-old French-born high school student from the Aurès, who was arrested during a demonstration in Paris on April 1993, testified. "They made me lean against a wall at the police station and everybody who came in hit me ... They also hit me with their helmets. When I fell, they kicked me. At that point, I felt I was going to die. I had only one thought, I wanted to get out so that I wouldn't die in a cage." Salim Hadjedj was lucky; he survived.

Khaled Kelkal, the 24-year-old Algerian prime suspect in the Paris metro bombings, did not. Last week, the police gunned him down near his home at *Maison Blanche*, a suburb of Lyons. As an Arab, Kelkal was by definition guilty until proven innocent — yet he was never allowed to plead his case.



Geoff, a 21-year-old French Canadian, catches up on some reading as he continues his month-long vigil outside the French Consulate in Sydney until France ends its nuclear test programme in the South Pacific (photo: AFP)

New dawn

Defeated at the presidential elections, the French socialists brace for post-electoral battle with the Gaullist right. **Diaa Rashwan** looks at the predicament of the left in France as it fights to leave its imprint on the country's political life

Almost five months after the end of the second round of the French presidential elections, the French Socialist Party (PS) is trying to overcome the deep crisis which threatened its future. Since the end of June, the party has made unprecedented efforts to rejuvenate its structure and ideas under the guidance of the party's candidate in the presidential elections, Lionel Jospin.

After Socialist President François Mitterrand's 14 years in power, it was clear, just before the last presidential elections, that the aspects of this crisis had multiplied. On the one hand, the Mitterrand years struck a severe blow to the popularity of the party. A low point was reached when, in the European Parliament elections of June 1994, it won only 14.5 per cent of the electorate's votes.

Secondly, internal wranglings within the party were argued out in the open and flaunted at the French public in such a way that the debates were no longer confined to the organisational structures but became national public debates. Thirdly, the party's domestic and foreign performance has been shackled by the party's stagnant policies and ideas. Finally, the ranks of the party's leadership, at the national and local levels, have been plagued, in recent years, by a large wave of financial and political corruption.

The PS consequently found itself in an unenviable position at the start of the last election campaign. The party appeared to be too weak to produce a serious rival for the presidential seat. The two Gaullist candidates, Edouard Balladur and Jacques Chirac, were making continued progress in the polls and the strongest socialist candidate, Jacques Delors, had withdrawn from the race.

At this juncture, Lionel Jospin was chosen by the party leadership to dig the party out of its crisis. Jospin managed to achieve something no analyst had predicted. He obtained the highest number of votes in the first round of the presidential elections and entered the second to battle with Chirac. He managed to mobilise all the forces of the PS and the French left in general and won 14.2 million votes — 47.37 per cent of the total — in this final round. With such a position of strength, he was able to assume a leading role in the party's long-awaited reform programme.

Jospin got to work immediately. Three days after the second round of the elections, he announced that all aspects of the party's makeup and performance needed to be thoroughly reviewed. After wrangling between the leaderships of the party's various wings, the PS agreed, on 29 June, to appoint Lionel Jospin as its secretary-general. Jospin, determined to secure for himself a strong mandate in this position, proposed that the election should consist of a direct vote by all cadres of the party and not just its leadership.

On 8 July, the party's national council decided to form a special reform committee, which will be headed by Lionel Jospin and include among its members representatives of the party's various trends from all levels. On 20 September, the committee presented a paper to the PS's national council, which comprised 18 questions debated at the general meetings that took place on 10 October.

The document is basically a summary of Jospin's vision of the path the reform process should take. Aside from asking for Jospin's position as secretary-general to be accepted by the party members as a whole, the document is divided into two main sections. The first begins by dealing with theoretical matters related to the party's practices, beginning by tackling the subject of the European Union and the trend towards globalisation. It then brings up the issues of fair income distribution and democracy and its relationship to the state's public institutions.

The second main section deals with the issues of democracy and effectiveness inside the PS itself. It poses a number of questions about the method which should be used for intra-party elections, the powers which should be given to the party's general and local conferences and the ethical framework within which the party should operate.

Despite the noble intentions of most of the ideas and suggestions in the paper and the support of most of the party base for them, there are a number of obstacles which will hinder the plans. Most of these obstacles are connected with the different trends in the PS. The strongest resistance is likely to come from the wing led by former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, which expresses to a certain extent the tendencies of former President Mitterrand. Significant resistance will also no doubt appear from the wing of former Prime Minister Michel Rocard, who rejected Jospin's nomination as presidential candidate because he still had long-harboured hopes of reaching the Elysée Palace.

Difficulties will probably also be created by the wing of the party's present Secretary-General Henri Emmanuelli, who has not forgotten the crushing defeat he suffered when he was pitted against Lionel Jospin in the vote on the party's candidate for the last presidential elections. What unites all these trends, besides their differences with Jospin's wing — considered to be on the left of the party — about the party line, is apprehension at Jospin's continued rise in prominence and the threat this poses to their leaders' hopes of being nominated for the next presidential elections in 2002.

These opposing trends have tried to use Jospin's widespread popularity to raise apprehensions about him. More than one wing leader has expressed the concern that Jospin's election to secretary-general by an overwhelming majority — which is expected — will lead to an increase in his powers at the expense of the party's decision-making bodies. The concern has reached the party base, something which has jolted Jospin into emphasising, on several occasions, his commitment to the principle of collective leadership and stressing that the team helping him as the secretary-general would include representatives of all the party's trends, especially those of Fabius and Rocard.

The wing leaders have also tried to stir the party members against the leftist tendencies of Jospin's wing, using the argument that they do not conform with the new world order which has emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Jospin has kept to the left on the basis that he received wide support for such a leaning among party members and the French lower classes during the presidential election campaign.

The recent developments in the French Socialist Party and, before that, the course of the presidential elections point to the fact that the PS and France as a whole are about to close the door of the Mitterrand era, with all its signifiers and symbols, behind them. This weekend, on 14 October — if no big surprises occur — Lionel Jospin will become the party's fifth secretary-general in seven years. Over the next few months and years, the PS will take on a new form and a different content which will affect not only the party itself but French political life in its entirety.

Falling victim to French flaws

Gamal Nkrumah recounts how an edgy France ran out of patience with Denard and why the downward spiral of the French franc has again highlighted an Africa falling victim to French fallibility .

Last week the world learnt how effortlessly France outflanks its foes in Africa — even if they are Frenchmen. Working on the premise that war is fun, and invoking a defence agreement between France and the Comoros signed in November 1978, Paris launched a military operation codenamed "Azalea" to reinstall democratic rule in its former Indian Ocean colony of Comoros. The Quai d'Orsay's one-time dog of war was handcuffed, hurried off to Paris and incarcerated in the city's infamous prison of La Santé. But, can France fool the world that it is fighting to keep the flame of freedom alive in contemporary post-colonial Africa?

Robert Denard is a member of a vicious African viral strain: the soldiers of fortunes nicknamed *affreux*, or frightful ones — European mercenaries who prop up authoritarian regimes in Africa and who leave a trail of death and destruction in their paths of blood. The Comoros was a perfect hideaway for *les affreux*. And it is a measure of the country's deplorable state of affairs that it took only 20 *affreux* to topple an elected government — albeit an unpopular one — and quell all forms of popular resistance without sacrificing the life of a single soldier. A 1,000-strong force brought Denard to heel and the French Ministry of Defence deems it sufficient to police the island with a force of no more than 100 men. Denard was a folly that has backfired on France.

France nakedly puts its own interests first, disfiguring in the process its foreign policy. So often, military intervention is the only way to keep heavily indebted low-income countries in Africa floating aimlessly about in the French orbit. The French occupation of the western regions of Rwanda in July and August 1994 sowed seeds of mistrust among several English-speaking eastern African nations. Few African political observers have forgotten the French intervention in Rwanda codenamed "Operation Turquoise". Francophone Africa's leaders need France. But, fret they do about the nature of their need.

Ironically, it was against the backdrop of an imposing tricolour that Denard was sent packing. France has foiled Comoran coups, but failed to halt the drift to African continental disorder in part spawned by the *affreux* and their false promise washed up on the shores of idyllic Indian Ocean isles. At first it sounded like a depressingly familiar scenario: Grenada revisited. In October 1983, Ronald Reagan ordered the invasion of Grenada and ousted coup leaders Bernard Coard and General Hudson Austin. They had overthrown Maurice Bishop — the Caribbean island's elected prime minister.

Such comparisons, it turned out, were unfounded as Azalea was an exceptionally smooth operation. Last week's Comoros coup leaders pronounced Mohamed Abdul-Karim and Said Ali Kamal as the new co-presidents of the predominantly Muslim Comoros and promised elections in a fortnight. Kamal and Abdul-Karim's coup was, however, radically different from the calculated intervention of Coard and Austin in Grenada. The two Caribbean leftist leaders were of a different calibre altogether.

Jacques Rummelhardt, a French Foreign Ministry spokesperson, disclosed that some 30 European mercenaries employed by Denard were handed over to the Comoran gendarmes. It is rumoured that the personal devotion to Denard among his loyal troops is such that he easily raises a private army of mercenaries wherever he is in Africa. Denard is likewise a gifted speaker who seems to his supporters to speak from the heart. He threw himself heart and soul into Africa and went native. Usually elegantly turned out in battle fatigues, Denard could always elicit scorn and disgust from the French media.

Admittedly, Djohar, the octogenarian president of an impoverished Indian Ocean island nation, was a sitting duck. Besides, according to Djohar's daughter Lelie, the French forced Djohar to leave his country. "They told him that, for reasons of security, he should leave. They didn't give him the choice of staying or going," she said.

The Comoran economy has several sidelines, none of which pay more than a pittance. Increasingly, the country relies for economic survival on the hard currency brought in by French and South African tourists. The Gulf Arabs have yet to rediscover the enchanting islands their ancestors claimed and romantically named "Isles of the Moon".

Denard, the aging veteran of tens of African bush wars, was granted Comoran citizenship and given a Comoran name, Said Mustapha Mahdjou, and a Comoran wife after he converted to Islam. He made the strategically located island nation of 500,000 his home. Denard gave a ridiculous rendition of his political convictions last week. "I'm Comoran. I'm proud of my men. I'm popular with the Comorans. They like me," he stated. Clearly the man is schizophrenic.

For Paris, an internationally discredited Denard is far more tolerable than an internationally compromised France. Denard was used as a hired gun in the past. France ensured that Denard was made to play bad guy by doing its dirty business. He was given a slight sentence for his murder of former Comoran President Ahmed Abdallah in 1989.

From an African perspective, Denard was ever one to champion politically incorrect causes. He was involved in half a dozen phoney African adventures fighting for the highest bidders in continental conflicts. The French soldier of fortune fought for Rhodesia, chasing African freedom fighters in the Zimbabwean bush; warred against leftist government forces in Angola, aligning himself with Jonas Savimbi's UNITA; and took part in the Nigerian civil war on the side of the Biafran secessionists. Denard has even done bloody stints in Yemen and Iran.

In Africa, France's political touch has never been overwhelmingly sure. In sharp contrast, Denard's confidence, despite the many blunders he has masterminded, has always exuded the self-assurance needed to boost France's image as Africa's undisputed policeman. As if Africa needed reminders, 4,000 French troops in the Indian Ocean were put on alert. Many of the region's islands are French-speaking, were French colonies or are still considered French territories — Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Réunion and Mayotte.

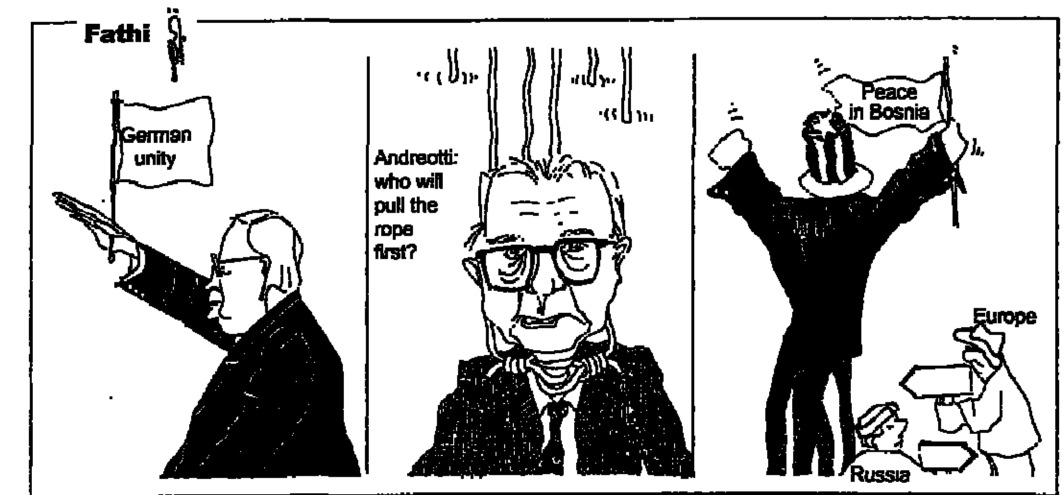
Last week's coup was the third time Denard had overthrown the Comoros government in the past two decades. Denard is also accused of murdering the former Comoran president in 1989 when he headed Abdallah's elite presidential guard. The 1989 attempted coup failed because the French invaded the Comoran archipelago and Denard fled the islands to South Africa. Denard returned to France in 1992 to stand trial for his implication in the plotting of a coup in 1977 in what was then Marxist-oriented Dahomey, now the Republic of Benin. Earlier, he took part in an aborted coup when Tshombe led a secessionist movement in 1961 in the Belgian Congo's Katanga, now the Zairian province of Shaba.

French Prime Minister Alain Juppé was forced to swallow his words. Juppé had soon after the six-day coup said that the French Foreign Legion troops based in the neighbouring French island of Mayotte would not be despatched to the Comoros, but the legionnaires did exactly that a few days later. But, eating his own words were the least of Juppé's worries; nearer home trouble brewed as the former deputy mayor of Paris was implicated in a developing legal probe into allegations that he abused his past position by exercising effective manipulation of the allocation of luxury Parisian apartments for the benefit of himself, his family and friends. There was a public outcry and accusations from the Association for the Defence of Parisian Taxpayers (ADCP) prompted the Paris prosecutor-general to investigate misallocations of funds and flats by the French prime minister.

Accordingly, this week the Bank of France tightened lending conditions in a desperate attempt to prevent the fall of the French franc. The Bank of France last intervened in that now all too familiar fashion last March when the French franc came under intensified pressures in the run-up to the presidential elections which brought President Jacques Chirac to the Elysée. Portfolio capital, particularly short-term lending, is especially prickly. The French intervention to thwart the coup in the Comoros did nothing to stop speculations against the franc.

Financial problems in France itself prompted African fears of a repetition of the disastrous devaluation of the Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) franc last year. Francophone Africa knows that if the French franc falls then so does the CFA franc, weakening the region's economy.

It is something of a cliché to speak of the economic failings of Francophone Africa. But, take the Comoros. France is its largest trading partner importing half of the country's export crops of vanilla, cloves and the aromatic spice ylang-ylang. Shortfalls in foreign exchange are met by French financial assistance under the Lomé Convention's Stabilisation of Export Earnings (STABEX) scheme. France decreed that the Comoros franc be devalued by a third in January 1994 along with the CFA franc of continental Francophone African countries. As in continental Africa, the devaluation of the Comoros franc prompted nationwide demonstrations and strikes by teachers, public sector employees and healthworkers. The rate of growth decreased to an annual average of 1.1 per cent between 1985 and 1995 and the World Bank puts gross national product at an estimated $262 million and per capita annual income at a paltry $510. There are no signs that Francophone Africa is being weaned off France.



Edited by **Gamal Nkrumah**

Al-Ahram Weekly

A portent of things to come?

Annex VII of the Palestinian-Israeli September 28 agreement on extending West Bank autonomy categorically states that "all female prisoners and detainees shall be released." Indeed, one of the successful bargains under the agreement was the unconditional release of all female Palestinian detainees incarcerated in Israeli jails.

But once again, Israeli commitment to peace is proving to be doubtful. If Israeli politicians are ultimately more concerned with placating the country's hard-liners than in securing lasting peace with the Palestinians then the fate of Palestinian female political prisoners still interned in Israeli jails may prove to be a *litmus test to the future of the entire peace process.*

The issue at first did not seem to be particularly linked to Israeli security concerns. The women are not convicted criminals. They are freedom fighters. Palestinians are now left with the perceptible feeling of being betrayed.

The Palestinian female prisoners' current incarceration is a violation of the Taba Agreement. The prisoners refused point blank to sign an Israeli demanded "oath" renouncing violence. This heroic act is a testament to the strength of Palestinian feeling, their anger and frustration, and their determination not to uphold the unjust Israeli laws. No Palestinian detainee should be forced to kow-tow to the injustice of the Israeli Constitution — and its warped provisos. It is, after all, inherently biased against Palestinians.

Palestinians were negotiating in good faith. Few Palestinian negotiators suspected that the Israeli President Ezer Weizman would refuse to commute the sentences of four of the female prisoners because they were "convicted murderers" of Israelis. The spirit and the letter of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement are *fast losing credibility under the weight of Israel's seemingly* uncompromising security policy. The fact that the Israeli president has now overruled Israeli commitment to implement all articles of the agreement bodes ill. Is it a portent of things to come?

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The twin challenge

Amin Howeidy examines what is needed in formulating a strategy that can guarantee more than mere survival

The formulation of future strategies is dependent upon defining the threats and challenges that the state may face in the future. And such future strategies, if they are to be in any way useful, must take account of the fact that there are no absolutes when it comes to relations between states. No friend is your friend forever. And what applies to friends applies equally well to enemies.

It is important, of course, to make a distinction between threats and challenges, a distinction, furthermore, that departs from the commonly accepted definition. Threats used to be perceived as external, challenges as originating within the borders of the state. Both constitute an attack on national security and have, historically, tended to follow a pattern. When threats are at their greatest, challenges tend to disappear onto the sidelines. But when there are few, if any, threats, then domestic challenges rear their head. Consequently, the *habit of fabricating border clashes as a means* to contain domestic insurgency has emerged among regimes that fear for their own survival.

Yet given contemporary transformations on both the international and regional levels it has become increasingly difficult to demarcate threats and challenges. Dangers emanating beyond the borders of any given state are no longer exclusively military. Threats to national security can come from a variety of sources: they may involve economic dimensions, might comprise environmental concerns or concern over essentials such as water supplies. And what had been a distinctive feature of threats and challenges in the past — that the abatement of one *generally leads to an increase in the other* — no longer holds water.

If change has affected patterns of conflict, it has also affected our understanding of peace. Peace, in the sense of the absence of differences or contradictions between states is now perceived as an illusion. Our aim, rather, should be more in tune with the possible — ie we should seek to ensure that nations co-exist regardless of their differences. In short, we should attempt to formulate mechanisms by which compromises can be reached and conflicts resolved without resorting to a military option.

The contemporary international order is anarchic. International legitimacy is used simply to serve the interests of the major powers. Legitimacy is invoked selectively, and therefore provides no guarantee that military intervention is off the cards. Negotiations are held everywhere, accords signed in ever greater number, and still arms expenditures multiply, still countries compete to outdo each other's arsenals.

Developing nations find themselves facing a double dilemma: they have to ensure that they possess the military capability to withstand possible threats while at the same time they must ensure that the standard of living of their populations is sufficient to minimise any potential domestic challenge to their authority.

Paul Kennedy summarised the dilemma in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*: "In List's opinion war or the very possibility of war makes the establishment of a manufacturing power an indispensable requirement for a nation of first-rank. Yet by going to war, or by devoting a large share of the nation's manufacturing power to expenditures upon unproductive *armaments one runs the risk of* eroding the national economic base especially vis-à-vis states which are concentrating a greater share of their income upon productive investment for long term growth."

This was fully recognised by the classical writers on political economy. Paul Kennedy continues: "Those who followed Adam Smith's preferences *inclined to keep defense* expenditures low, those sympathetic to List's notion of national economy wanted to see the state possess greater instruments of force."

Decision-makers are confronted with an age old dilemma: do they want wealth or power, butter or guns, fat or muscle?

Basically they have three choices. They can opt for strength at the expense of a strong economic base, a choice made, with disastrous consequences, by Nazi Germany and the former Soviet Union. This has been the option followed so far by Israel, which appears now to be seeking to change its direction. Having realised that without continuing US support the present status quo would be impossible to maintain, Israel suddenly became willing to reach a peaceful settlement with the Arabs. (Unfortunately they speak peace with nuclear weapons in their right hand, conventional weapons in their left hand, and conventional-plus weapons — weapons of mass destruction — under the table.)

The second option is to develop a strong economic base so as the ensure a high standard of living for your citizens. Influence can then be wielded in the marketplace rather than the battlefield.

Japan and Germany were given no choice but to follow this strategy at the end of World War II. Yet despite the ensuing economic miracles, both countries fall squarely beneath the American umbrella. They do, after all, depend on the US for their defence.

The third choice? To aim at military and economic strength. It is unlikely, though, that the world possesses sufficient resources to underwrite two Americas.

In my book *Militarisation and Security in the Middle East and its Impact on Development and Democracy* I concentrated on the impact of defence expenditures on national economies, concluding that the supposed spin-offs of defence expenditure, which it is claimed can boost national economies, were an illusion. They certainly have not been witnessed in developing countries.

Levels of military spending are sky-rocketing. According to Paul Kennedy "a pre-1914 battleship cost $2.5 million while now it costs $120 million and more for a replacement frigate. Bombers cost 200 times as much as they did in World War II, fighters cost one hundred times or more, *battle tanks 15 times*. The entire Pentagon budget may be swallowed up on one aircraft by the year 2020. The sophistication of weapons raised the number of spare parts in a fighter to *100,000 separate parts*. The consequence has been an explosion in Third World military expenditures even by the poorest regimes."

It is expected that Egypt's population will have reached 96 million by 2025. Will our economic growth match this rise in population, let alone allow for any improvement in standards of living? A balance between the demands of the defence budget and competing objectives such as raising levels of consumption and investing in an *up to date* industrial base is urgently needed.

What is urgently needed is a concerted effort to determine precisely what our national security needs are. It is an effort that must involve the entire executive, and which must be carefully and properly directed.

We are in no position to imitate the strategies of the major powers. We are not they, nor they us. Imitation may well be the sincerest form of flattery, but in this particular context it is a road *leading to nothing other* than a mirage.

The writer is a former minister of defence and chief of intelligence.

The impending water crisis

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed discusses the likelihood of water replacing land as the major source of friction throughout the Middle East

The World Bank recently issued an alarming report warning of an impending water crisis of global proportions. The report stresses that water shortages have become a structural phenomenon linked to patterns of contemporary human behaviour, not, as might have been supposed, a climatic, and hence transient, phenomenon.

Giant overcrowded cities and the excessive reliance of existing agricultural methods on irrigation have led to a severe imbalance in the equation between water supply and demand, which is further compounded by the demographic explosion. As yet, we lack the technolog*ical tools to redress the balance, and* it was an awareness of this and other constraints that led the population conference held in Cairo last year to call for a curb on unchecked population growth.

With pollution further reducing the amount of clean water that is available, today's mega-cities are having to look for sources of water further and further afield — or to dig for them deeper and deeper — to respond to demand. What this means in real terms is that free and unlimited access to clean water, the source and basis of all life, will soon be a thing of the past, with disastrous consequences for the world at large *and for the poorer countries in particular.*

According to the World Bank report, "it is scarcity of water, not lack of land, that represents the major obstacle to agricultural development. In most Third World countries — as well as in a number of developed countries — 80 per cent of water resources go to irrigation, thanks to which between 30 to 40 per cent of agricultural production can be effected on only 17 per cent of the arable land." The report singles out North Africa and the Middle East as the regions which will suffer most from massive water shortages. Experts fear that the per capita share of *water in those two regions will* decrease by 80 per cent in the span of one lifetime. Their calculations show that between 1960 and 2025, the share of each person in available water resources will have dropped from 3,430 cubic metres to 667 cubic metres per annum, which is far below the 2,000 cubic metre danger level. This lends credence to the chilling prediction made by the vice-president of the World Bank, Ismail Serageldin, that wars in the next century will be fought over water, not oil — *or land.*

With the looming water crisis in the Middle East making it a likely arena for these wars, it is small wonder that the distribution of scarce water resources stands as one of the main stumbling blocks in the way of the current peace negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. So far, the two parties are unable to agree on how water should be distributed among *5 million Israelis* and the 2.4 million Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Israel now obtains one third of its water consumption needs from groundwater sources in the West Bank. These produce 650 million cubic metres a year, of *which only 130 million are* destined for the Palestinians. This problem was partially resolved in the peace treaty signed between Israel and Jordan on 26 October 1994, under the terms of which Israel pledged to furnish Jordan annually with 50 million cubic metres of water from the Yarmouk River. Israel also agreed to participate in projects designed to provide Jordan with an additional 100 million cubic metres a year.

The equation of water is also an important factor in the stalemate in the Syrian-Israeli peace talks. The Golan's 170 water sources go a long way to explaining Israel's reluctance to hand the heights back to Syria. *The Likud opposition points to the* fact that 30 per cent of Israel's supply of potable water currently comes from these sources to justify not applying the land-for-peace formula on the Syrian front.

Nor are the regional dimensions of the water-scarcity problem *likely* to remain confined between Israel on the one side and the Syrians, Jordanians and Palestinians on the other. Other potential flash points: the distribution of the waters of the Euphrates between Syria, Iraq and Turkey and *the distribution* of the Nile water between Egypt and Sudan, not to mention the water shortage problems of the arid Gulf states. Thus although water shortage is a global problem, its political implications at the regional level make the Middle East particularly vulnerable to flare-ups of tension.

One way of avoiding such a scenario is to step up the search for a method of desalinating sea water economically. This was the theme of a book I recently published in Arabic under the title: *Peace or Mirage?*, warning that peace is likely to remain a mirage in the deserts of the Middle East unless the inhabitants of the region *succeed* in generating new sources of water by means of as yet undiscovered technologies. Their discovery could be the key to overcoming the Arab-Israeli conflict, in addition to solving the water-scarcity problem threatening the whole Arab world. It would also usher in a new age of *ecological* engineering, as human inventiveness seeks to undo the ravages wrought by nature in the dawn of history. *The vast deserts of* the Middle East are said to be the result of a collision between two huge land masses, the Indian subcontinent, then an island, and the rest of the Asian mainland. The collision led to the formation of the Himalayas, *which impeded the natural* flow of winds and transformed vast *expanses of fertile* agricultural land into barren deserts stretching from the Gulf in the east to Morocco in the west.

Actually, ecological engineering is not so far-fetched when we consider the impressive results human inventiveness is already achieving in the field of *genetic* engineering. This century has also witnessed attempts at *social* engineering, albeit less successful. *The most ambitious* experiment in this field, the socialist project, which represented an attempt to restructure societies in line with a predetermined vision, failed to live up to its promise. However, that is not to say that an updated version of the project should be written off, especially that the laissez-faire ethic of capitalism, which believes in allowing *matters* to develop 'spontaneously' with little or no intervention from the state, is out of key with the requirements of an age in which a degree of control is essential to protect the ecosystem from the negative side effects of modern technology.

Hence the need for ecological engineering *if we are to rise to the* challenges of the next century. One of the main challenges will be the growing shortage of water, and one of the most effective ways of overcoming it is to develop new technologies capable of desalinating sea water. A main premise in my book is that deserts have become obsolete, but that if we are to conquer them we need to generate new sources of water to transform them into fertile land capable of sustaining life. The desalination technologies currently available, and which are used extensively by the oil rich Gulf states, are too costly to be generalised. New cost-effective technologies must be invented. In the fields of spacecraft and computers, the price of the first prototypes has been reduced ten thousand fold: why not in the field of desalination techniques too? But can the issues of ecology acquire precedence over those of ideology? An *important* question to be addressed in next week's column.

The coming elections

By Naguib Mahfouz

It will be to everyone's benefit if the parliament that follows the forthcoming elections comprises members of the NDP, the Wafd, the Nasserists, Labour and the Tagammu. A one-sided parliament is, after all, a paltry thing, incapable of representing the political spectrum.

No society can be adequately represented by a single point of view. A strong parliament, which means a representative parliament, must reflect all the positions found *outside its walls*. True, political trends now find expression in party media, unhampered by censorship. The government is no longer in the habit of confiscating published items that are not to its taste. But such trends should also exist with*in parliament*. They *must* be represented in debates and on committees, and in actual votes on legislation. Views contrary to those held by the government must be given a fair hearing. Only then can a parliamentary democracy operate in any meaningful way.

Democracy cannot exist without the kind of parliamentary procedures that allow for the expression of each and every opinion. Will the majority, that has for years been content to listen to its own opinions, learn that there are other voices to which it must listen? Will the opposition be given the opportunity to discover that it has a great deal to gain from the practice of democracy? We must wait and see.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

By Hassan Fouad

October recollections

THIS WEEK the national press gave prominence to the 22nd anniversary of the October War victory and some of the opposition papers followed suit. The issue of the Palestinians expelled by Libya to the Egyptian border was the second top story.

On Friday, 6 October, the banner headlines of the national papers carried the speech given by President Mubarak on the eve of the anniversary of the victory. Under the headline "The anniversary of the glorious victory" **Al-Ahram** commented editorially: "There can be no doubt that the October War was the key to peace. What was achieved on the ground altered the balance of power in the region and enabled the Arabs to speak about peace from a position of strength — a situation totally different from the surrender overtures predicted by the Israelis in the wake of their false victory in the June 1967 War.

On the same day under the title *"The spirit of October"* **Al-Gomhuria** commented: "If the late President Sadat was responsible for the brave de*cision to go to war, he was also* responsible for the first peace initiative which paved the way for what is taking place today in the way of Arab-Israeli negotiations."

Also on the same day **Galal Dwidar**, editor-in-chief of **Al-Akhbar**, wrote a two-column article on page one entitled "God's peace on the martyrs on the anniversary of the victory" in which he said: "There is a clear difference between the behavioural patterns of the Egyptians, with 7,000 years of civilisation behind them, and the Israeli army gangs who committed every atrocity against Egyptian POWs — military and civilians — in the 1956 and 1967 wars. Israel waged these two wars with full support from the big powers to punish Egypt for nationalising the Suez Canal and leading the world freedom movement."

On the question of Egyptian POWs killed by the Israelis during the 1956 and 1967 wars, the satirical writer **Ahmed Ragab** wrote on page one of **Akhbar Al-Yom** *under* the title "The age of ignorance": "I feel very embarrassed that it was an Israeli officer who alerted us to the killing of Egyptian POWs 39 years ago without the government or military authorities knowing anything about their slain soldiers at the time. The names of the soldiers killed in the Napoleonic wars, for instance, are kept in military dossiers to this day. And the Americans recorded *the names of soldiers killed in* Vietnam and have set up a huge cemetery in Arlington in which the remains of those *killed are buried. Although we* lost 18,000 soldiers in Yemen there is no record whatsoever of their names or where they are buried."

And on the back page of **Akhbar Al-Yom**, **Moustafa Amin** wrote in his daily column: "The spirit of 6 October has killed off the utterance 'I will put you in the military prison' which intimidated the innocent, the honourable and the patriot. It *caused people to* live an oppressed life frightened by every knock on the door and terrified every time a car stopped *outside the house*. All this was a catastrophe which stopped the progress of the nation and impoverished its people.

"We hope that these disasters do not recur and that Egypt will live with the spirit of 6 October without tyranny or a military dictatorship or a relapse."

Ibrahim Saada, editor-in-chief of **Akhbar Al-Yom**, chose to devote his weekly column on page one to the role played by the late President Sadat in preparing for the October War. Under the title "Guardians of a memory" he wrote: "Truly, the late President Anwar El-Sadat endured the sarcasm of his nation and that of the rest of the Arab na*tions, not to mention non-Arab* nations, in a manner which others would not have been able to.

"We used to wonder at the time at the lack of reaction by Sadat towards the waves of ridicule to which he was subjected. He continued to visit units of the armed forces in his distinctive uniform. With the passing of time we lost interest in what Sadat was saying about the coming battle and his preparations for it, his comings and goings for its sake. At the beginning we made fun of him but we later lost even the *desire* to be derisive. The picture was totally black.

"If the Egyptian people did *not believe what their leader* was saying, was it possible to expect anyone else to believe him? Was it possible for even the most pessimistic Israeli leader to believe that there was the slightest possibility that Sadat would be as good as his word and launch a war against Israel? The answer to that question is a plethora of no's, and Sadat's statements were treated with derision in every household in Egypt and Israel. It transpired later that was exactly what Sadat wanted."

On Saturday **Al-Wafd** said that the crisis between the Libyan authorities and the Palestinians had grown to include Egyptian nationals. Its banner headline read "A tragedy for Egyptians in Libya". **Gamal Badawi**, the editor-in-chief, wrote a page-one editorial over two columns entitled "Gaddafi's missiles" in which he said: "What will the Egyptian authorities do to protect Egyptians from insults, beatings and detention in the cities of the Great Libyan Ja*mahiriyah?*

"The Egyptian authorities once maintained silence in the face of Gaddafi's missiles on the pretext of protecting the rights of Egyptians working in Libya, but now the pretext has fallen through and Gaddafi has declared war on the Egyptians.

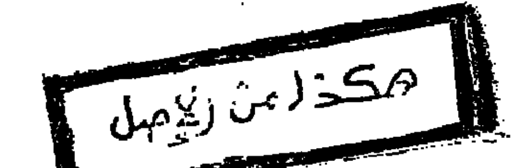
"As for the Sudanese, it was said that their government had sent a couple of ships to carry them back home. And as for the Palestinians, Gaddafi set up *detention camps on the Egyp*tian border for them so that he could bring pressure on Egypt to open its door and allow them to proceed to Palestinian territory.

"And as this was unlikely to happen Gaddafi appeared before them to incite them against Egypt. He promised to build them a luxurious city on the border *equipped* with hospitals, schools and air-conditioned houses! This city would be a symbol of the failure of the Palestinian National Authority and proof of their betrayal of the Palestinian cause!

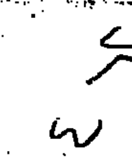
"He is not concerned that the question of the Palestinian refugees should grow more complex and that he is adding more refugees to those expelled by Israel! He has not hesitated to use the Arab labour card to satisfy his whims and draw attention to himself, turning his back on values, ethics and civilised norms."

> *'There can be no doubt that the October War was the key to peace. What was achieved on the ground altered the balance of power in the region and enabled the Arabs to speak about peace from a position of strength'*
> **Al-Ahram**

> *'Was it possible for even the most pessimistic Israeli leader to believe that Sadat would be as good as his word and launch war? Sadat's statements were treated with derision in every household [which] was exactly what Sadat wanted'*
> **Ibrahim Saada**







Al-Ahram Weekly

Special Supplement

The 11th General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (WTO)

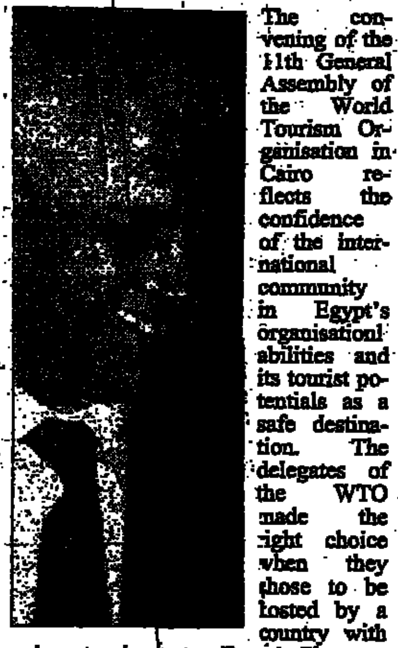
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Eye on the future

By **Mandouh El-Beltagui**



The convening of the 11th General Assembly of the World Tourism Organisation in Cairo reflects the confidence of the international community in Egypt's organisationl abilities and its tourist potentials as a safe destination. The delegates of the WTO made the right choice when they chose to be hosted by a country with unique tourist assets. Egypt's Pharaonic, Greco-Roman, Coptic and Islamic monuments are without parllel. Its location is a meeting ground between East and West — the gateway from the West to the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

A natural environment enriched by the River Nile, the Mediteranean and the Red Sea, and with a coastline stretching for 2700km of mainly sandy, unpolluted shore, inclnding the Red Sea's wealth of coral rees and marine life attracts many visitors. Adventure tourism is a relatively new field, and our deserts are opening up, with more people exploring the oases of the Western Desert. Our mild climate all year round is a majorasset in promoting these natural attractions.

Recent years have seen anincrease in lodging capacity — reaching 121,000 beds — and there ha been a vast improvement in tourist services. We can now cater for fields o' interest as diverse as culture, aqua spors, desert safaris, incentive, eco- and curative tourism, and last but by no mens least, conferences and conventions.

As you know, Egypt is experiencing an increasing demand as a sitefor international conferences. The UN conference on Crime Prevention held in May last year was followed by the International Conference of Pedatricians, and now the General Assemlly of the World Tourism Organisation. In 1994, Egypt in fact hosted 136 international and national conventions including the UN International Conference on Population and Development; and the number is expected to rise in the coming years.

Our intensive promotionl campaign abroad, under the slogan "Egypt Has It All" has fulfilled its targets. There was a significant increase in the tourist flow in the period from July to December 1994, and from January to August this year two million tourists have come to Egypt, an increase of 15.1 per cent over the same period in 1994. This trend is set to continue. The overall picture regarding tourist investments has changed radically in recent years. Whereas, in the past, there was a certain reluctance on the part of investors, now there is competition between them, and the ministry is exercising its authority in evaluating the merits of each. In the fiscal year 1994-1995, one hundred tourist projects have been allocated for investment, with an overall area of 39 million square metres, and a potential cost LE 8.7 billion.

I would like to emphasise that the Ministry of Tourism is not selling land, whose value will be inflated year after year. This is against our policy. Instead, the Treasury and not the Ministry of Tourism or the Tourism Development Authority allocate the land at a nominal price of $1 per square metre. In return for this, investors carry the responsibility for the entire infrastructure as well as the superstructure of their projects. New markets have opened. Travellers are coming to Egypt in large numbers from Japan, and Russia. South Africans are casting their sights on Egypt, as are South Americans.

We believe proper marketing and promotion is essential for the continued development and growth of the tourist industry and while private sector investors will continue to market and promote their product, the government is enhancing these efforts through a comprehensive promotional plan targeting important markets like the USA, Britain, Italy, France, Germany and Japan, as well as the new markets.

In the next stage of our communications strategy, we intend to benefit from the achievements that modern technology has made possible. Through the international information network(Internet), we plan to reach out to about 30 million potential consumers who will be informed about Egypt and its tourist products, services and prices at the mere press of a button. Finally, in an effort to increase the length of tourists' stay in Egypt, and encourage them to come again, we are diversifying our product combining cultural and leisure tourism and enabling visitors to experience different aspects of Egypt.



The excitement of exploring the ascending corridor of Khufu's Great Pyramid

photos: Sherif Sonbol

Back in shape

Tourists are flocking to Egypt once again. The *Weekly*'s travel reporters take a close look at the resurgence of one of the country's most important industries

The monuments and tombs of Egypt are drawing the crowds once again. Travel workers are reporting healthy hotel and cruise boat occupancy figures for the first time after a three-year crisis during which tourist numbers plummeted as a result of terrorist operations.

The country's famous archeological sites are reverberating with gasps of wonder and the sounds of cameras clicking, while the Red Sea beaches are teeming with tanned visitors making the most of Egypt's year-round sunshine.

The days of empty cruisers lined up on the Nile banks, of semi-deserted temples, and of despondent bazaar workers hardly bothering to tout their wares, are over. At last, travel workers and government officials alike are claiming victory over the terrorist campaign which sought to decimate the country's economy by driving away its main source of foreign exchange.

In Upper Egypt — one of the worst hit areas — tourist numbers are noticeably up. "This season is completely different from last year in Upper Egypt," said Ziad Anwar, a tour guide. "Now there are no Nile cruisers searching for clients. Occupancy rates vary from 70 to 80 per cent and sometimes the boats are fully booked. The phenomenon of having a Nile cruiser operating with no more than ten clients is over."

The results are also felt at the sites. "Now in the Valleys of the Kings and Queens in Luxor or in any of the temples, I have to wait for a while until the crowds are gone. In the past I used to tour the temples and the tombs alone with my group," said Anwar.

An increase in charter flights from Hurghada to Luxor is one explanation for the tourism revival in Upper Egypt. "Many tourists now come from Hurghada, stay overnight in Luxor and then return to Hurghada," said Anwar. "Others come from Hurghada, take a seven-day cruise from Luxor to Aswan, go back to Luxor, and then leave by charter plane to Hurghada. More charter flights are expected in October and November from Italy and Holland."

Ministry of Tourism figures for the first half of 1995 show a 19 per cent rise in the number of tourists visiting the country compared to the same period last year. At the same time the number of nights spent by tourists in Egypt increased by 39 per cent.

The boom in tourism is being felt throughout the Middle East, but the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) singled out Egypt as one of the principal sources of tourism growth in the region. WTO Secretary-General Enriquez Savignac attributed Egypt's success to an "aggressive marketing campaign abroad".

Egypt's campaign has extended to Russia and South Africa and is also aimed at the Japanese and other south-east Asian markets. Its main thrust, however, has been in Europe where a wave of press and poster advertising, coupled with television and satellite slots, have yielded impressive results.

According to ministry figures, the European market — which accounts for about half of all visitors to Egypt — has increased by 41 per cent, following advertising campaigns particularly targeting Italy, France, the United Kingdom and Germany. In the first six months of 1995, the number of Italian visitors increased by 76 per cent, French by 46 per cent, British by 16 per cent, and Germans by 20 per cent.

The upsurge is so encouraging that a Ministry of Tourism report predicted that revenue figures for the first half of 1995 could reach $1billion. If so, tourist revenues this year will surpass "the revenues of the peak season in 1992 which amounted to $2.1billion", the report stated.

The improved figures are also partly attributable to intriguing archeological discoveries which have gained widespread publicity and whetted visitors' interest in Egypt's ancient history. In Luxor, Abdel-Aziz El-Baily, head of the inspectors team in the Valley of the Kings, said tourists are anxious to see the tomb of Ramses II's 55 sons unearthed by American archeologist Kent Weeks earlier this year.

"Most of the tourists visiting the valley want to take a peek at the new site, although the tomb is not officially open to the public," said El-Baily.

Near Cairo, the influx of tourists is also felt at the three most famous archeological sites — Giza, Memphis and Saqqara. Air-conditioned buses disembarking tourists are vying for parking space. Guards are beaming their welcome.

Tour guides say visitors are better informed about the monuments, including the threat of deterioration, suggesting that numerous articles in the foreign press about the condition of the ancient ruins are filtering through. "People are asking serious questions about the effect of environmental pollution on the Sphinx's condition," said one guide. "I am asked about new discoveries and steps being taken to protect the reliefs," commented another.

At Saqqara, tour groups are being forced to queue up to see well-known tombs such as those of Ti, Mereruka and Ptahhotep. Others are escaping the crush by choosing newly opened, less frequented tombs.

But some of the country's treasures are too famous and too popular to miss. Mohamed Saleh, director of the Egyptian Museum on Cairo's Tahrir Square, reported a record number of visitors in the month of September. More than 100,000 foreign tourists and 26,500 Egyptians visited the museum last month, said Saleh, bringing in revenues of LE1.8million, of which LE596,000 was generated by the royal mummies, which tourists must pay a surcharge to view.

Gazing at the earthen remains of one of Egypt's greatest pharaohs, Ramses II



Tourists are back

Global tourism

The World Tourism Organisation, founded 20 years ago, now has 125 member countries and 300 affiliate members. The 11th General Assembly is being convened in Cairo, giving Egypt an opportunity to strengthen its ties with the international tourist community, writes Mursi Saad El-Din

Every day, new discoveries in the field of communication are eroding the barriers between different nations and cultures. Instant access to information networks, satellite television, and the ubiquity of the telephone mean all but the most far flung communities in the remotest parts of the world are in constant contact and exchange, whether through cultural, economic or political channels.

This phenomenon is accentuated by international travel and aided by the efforts of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) which describes itself as "the only intergovernmental organisation that serves as a global forum for tourism policy and issues." The WTO's aim is to "develop tourism as a significant means of fostering international peace and understanding, economic development and international trade."

This aim is achieved through a variety of means, the most evident of which is the international meetings of its members and affiliated states all over the world.

The topics raised at the WTO meetings reflect its global outlook and groundbreaking approach to key issues in the tourism industry. For example, at the first WTO world conference on sustainable tourism held in the Canary Islands, the 900 representatives from 90 countries agreed on a charter for environmental action with far reaching implications.

The charter underlined the often neglected link between tourism and environmental action and reached the following conclusions: that tourism promotes environmental awareness; that well managed tourism is a friend to the environment and that a successful tourist industry needs a high quality environment.

By supporting such a clear policy of environmental awareness, the WTO acted as a trend-setter, at least encouraging its members to be aware of the critical importance of preserving the natural world, and at best triggering an immediate and active response from participating countries whose tourist industry depends on concerted environmental action.

The connection between successful tourism and a well-maintained environment is amply illustrated here in Egypt where the boom in Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba tourism — to give just one example among many — is dependent on preserving the coral reefs and clear waters which attract visitors to the area.

The WTO's first environmental charter was consolidated last month during a meeting that grouped organisation members, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Earth Council. There the WTO Secretary General, Antonio Enriquez Savignac, stressed that the rapidly developing tourist industry "requires an unspoilt environment in which to prosper".

The WTTC President Geoffrey Lipman seconded these views, describing the environment as "the core asset of the travel and tourism industry. It is the key to providing a quality product and [it is] an increasing priority for our customers".As the world's largest industry, tourism has the potential to bring about environmental improvement and people involved in the industry have a vested interest in doing so. Let us return to the example of the Red Sea — if diving instructors and boat operators insist on their customers following certain rules (not anchoring on reefs, not breaking the coral or feeding the fish) then the environment will be maintained longer, ultimately attracting more visitors and bringing in more money for the tourism industry.

Tourism can also help preserve important historical and cultural roots in world countries. The WTO is thus promoting the so-called Slave Route Project, tracing the history of the slave trade and restoring sites and monuments along the way which were connected with this notorious practice.

Thus it can be seen that tourism can have a positive influence on the environments and people with which it has immediate contact. The WTO has its finger on the pulse of world tourism in the 21st century. Let us keep our ears close to the ground.



Camels setting their paces in Northern Sinai

Snorklers off-shore at Hurghada — photos: Khaled El-Fiqi

Conference crowds

Conference tourism has witnessed a boom with many international events choosing Egypt as a venue

Egypt has recently become one of the most popular locations to host international conferences, a fact confirmed by the United Nations which chose it for three of its biggest conferences in 1994 and 1995.

"Three international conferences have been held in Egypt in less than a year," announced Fawzy Abdel-Maqsoud, head of the Cairo International Conference Centre (CICC). These were the International Conference for Communications, attended by 11,000 participants and visitors. The Crime Prevention Conference with 5,000 delegates and, finally, the well-publicised ICPD, the International Conference on Population and Development, later described as "the conference of the 20th century." It was attended by 116,000 people.

Conference tourism has flourished in Egypt since the late 1980s, when the CICC officially opened its doors. Since then, 349 successful international as well as local conferences were held there.

"Conference tourism gains more ground every day," said Abdel-Maqsoud. "It also gives a boost to historical and recreational tourism, and benefits the national economy."

Abdel-Maqsoud commented that international conferences attract a large number of tourists, usually well-to-do. "They provide enormous propaganda for the host country. No wonder there is fierce competition to host conferences" he added.

Egypt is fortunate in having many assets that qualify it for hosting such large conferences: its strategic location between Europe, Africa and Asia; its national airline EgyptAir, with connections to all parts of the world; five-star hotels which can cater for large numbers; a good climate, also, there are a variety of additional attractions ranging from historical sites to beaches and shopping opportunities.

The CICC has four well-equipped halls, their capacity ranging from 100 to 3,000 persons and, should extra facilities be required, many five-star hotels provide conference halls.

Abdel-Maqsoud added: "Egypt now stands equal to any country, even those that have been in the field much longer. So far our management of international conferences has convinced the organisers of such events of the value of choosing Egypt as a host country." He referred to a recent poll conducted by an American magazine in which Egypt came top among Middle East and North African countries in the organisation of specialised conferences. During the fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, Egypt was again referred to as one of the countries most capable of hosting major conferences.

In order to further develop its facilities, the CICC is now entering a new phase of data-gathering. Computers will be installed and the CICC will soon be joining the Internet. This will provide easier access to information affecting decision-making, marketing policies and, according to Maqsoud, "stir up more competition with other countries."

The conference centre is now arranging conferences scheduled beyond the year 2000. Abdel-Maqsoud suggested that it is perhaps time to think seriously about establishing more conference centres in Cairo, and perhaps in the other governorates as well. He believes that the CICC alone might eventually face some difficulties in trying to accommodate all the conferences that have been earmarked to take place in Egypt. "It is essential to think about founding more centres to accommodate this promising and fast-growing brand of tourism," he said.

Opening up new playgrounds

Jumping in the waves, racing with the wind, riding in the sun or under a full moon: a change of pace, a change of mood to shake off the monuments blues

Egypt's promotion of sports tourism began in the late '70s with the country's first international rowing festival. The success of this event brought interest from abroad, and the idea of holding regular sports festivals came to fruition five years ago, when the Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA) and the Egyptian Angling Federation decided to hold fishing festivals five times a year at different sites.

In Hurghada, an annual international angling contest is held in February, followed by a national one in July. Two others are held at Sharm Al-Sheikh in South Sinai, an international competition in November, with a national competition in May. Port Said also stages a national angling festival in October.

Aside from the main event, folk dancing exhibitions, cycling and jogging races, exhibitions of local handicrafts, fishing and water sports are added attractions.

With the success of these festivals, others followed. An annual international diving competition is held at Sharm Al-Sheikh, for example, and, in Alexandria, an international regatta for boats in the Laser and Dragon class is organised by the Egyptian Yachting and Water Ski Federation in cooperation with the Yacht Club of Egypt. The Egyptian naval forces and the Arab Academy for Science and Technology are also actively involved.

"The competition is scheduled for October in an effort to extend Alexandria's tourist season", explained Youssef Mazhar, head of the Egyptian Yachting and Water Ski Federation. Boats in the Laser class, he added, were provided by the organising committee, while participants in the Dragon class brought their own vessels. Special arrangements are being made for the transportation of these boats from Europe to Alexandria at reduced cost.

For horse lovers, two large, well organised Arab horse shows are held annually in Egypt. One is in Sharqiya governorate in May, the other in November at Al-Zahraa farm in Ain Shams.

These shows are very popular, according to Ibrahim El-Harass, head of domestic tourism at the ETA, attracting large numbers of participants and spectators. And while there is already a strong presence from the Gulf countries, the shows are becoming popular with Europeans as well.

With the introduction of camel festivals, a favourite Arab sport has come into its own again. A three-day festival held in August in Al-Arish attracts visitors from across the Arab world, and is followed by an international camel festival in September. Here too, the occasion is enhanced by folkloric arts, poetry readings and seminars.

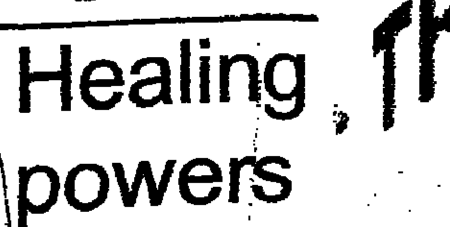
The Pharaoh's Rally is another annual event which has gained international popularity. The rally takes place in the Western Desert in October, and competitors gather at the Pyramids of Giza and follow a route through the oases. Last year participants were thrilled to discover that their route also took them through the Eastern Desert and Sinai.

Windsurfing in Sinai — photo: Sherif Sonbol

National festivals are sponsored and organised by local organisations as well as the ETA. The General Organisation of Cultural Palaces, the Angling Federation, Rowing Federation, Yachting and even private companies are sponsoring events.

And while sports enthusiasts may come to Egypt just to participate in a festival, their presence also promotes other aspects of tourism. "These events not only attract participants and their families, friends and supporters," said El-Harass, "but they offer a great opportunity for promoting the attractions of the resorts and the region in general."

Brochures and booklets on historical sites and tourist areas now include details of national and sports festivals, and in an effort to boost attendance, El-Harass said that famous personalities like actors and pioneer sportsmen and women are invited to attend. With festivals in other sports, including snooker, tennis, boxing and athletics poised to become annual events, there should be many more successful festivals in the future.



Healing powers

Safaga is being sought by people in search of natural cures for long-standing complaints including arthritis and rheumatism

The sun, sea and sand of Safaga were proven to have dramatic curative effects on patients suffering from arthritis, rheumatism, and a chronic skin complaint called psoriasis. The discovery has triggered a surge in health tourism to the Red Sea resort.

Experiments on more than 3,500 patients over the last two years at Safaga have shown a 90 per cent success rate, according to studies carried out by the National Research Centre (NRC).

The restorative powers of the climate were discovered by chance when a member of a Swedish tourist group, suffering from psoriasis, which makes the skin dry and scaly, found his condition improved radically during a stay in Safaga.

No complicated course of therapy was necessary — the tourist simply swam and sun-bathed. His case prompted a thorough study of the therapeutic effects of the area, with the discovery that Safaga has no case of psoriasis or rheumatism among its inhabitants. Cases of rheumatic pain and asthma among visitors also noticably improve there.

Dr Hany El-Nazer, head of the Climatotherapy Unit in Safaga's tourist village of Menaville, largely attributes the phenomenon to the fact that the town is surrounded by mountains which work as natural buffers, helping to sieve out dust particles, and hence condense the ultraviolet rays in the air. Another contributing factor is the high salt content in the water.

The curative effects of Safaga match those of Israel's Dead Sea area which is internationally renowned for its restorative powers.

The findings at Safaga have already prompted a flood of inquiries from Europe and the USA about the possibility of undergoing a treatment, said Dr El-Nazer. The NRC has hired a 100-bed tourist village to act as a medical centre catering for limited-income patients.

As a result of Safaga's growing reputation as a health spa, occupancy rates have reached almost 100 per cent in the last two years, according to Mohamed Lahita, owner of Menaville, which was the first tourist village in Safaga to accommodate a specialised unit for climatic therapy.

For more information, please contact: Menaville Village, Cairo: 02/3630431; Hurghada: 065/451761/2/3

Other destinations

Adel Abdel-Aziz, head of the ETA said that the country's 1,350 sulphuric and mineral springs can be used in the treatment of a variety of diseases. The springs boast some of the highest temperatures and highest mineral and sulphur contents in the world. Both elements have proved beneficial not only for rheumatic joints, but also for the treatment of respiratory, digestive and skin diseases.

Fayoum:
Renowned for its mineral springs, the most famous of which are Al-Sellin and Al-Sha'er, about 8km from Fayoum City. The water is 22C all year round and is effective treatment for high blood pressure and arteriosclerosis.
Contact Ein Al-Sellin Hotel: 084/327471

South Sinai:
Year round sunshine and hot sand have made South Sinai popular with those suffering from rheumatic pain. The Hammamat Faraon (Pharaoh's Baths) — a number of springs that extend for 1km along the Gulf of Suez — are particularly renowned for their curative effects. The water contains harmless radioactive elements. A $20m spa, now under construction, will include the most up-to-date techniques for the treatment of bone and skin diseases.
For more information contact: Misr Sinai Tourist Company 02/230072

Aswan:
Burying in the sand has been practised on Elephantine Island, Aswan, since the 1960s, using the radioactive properties in the sand to treat rheumatism and other bone diseases. The Aswan Oberoi Health Spa, founded in 1983, also offers a gymnasium, sauna, Swedish massage, private exercise classes and other facilities.
Contact the Aswan Oberoi 097/323455 - 314666

Dakhla Oasis:
Three springs named Mut, about 3km from Mut City, have temperatures around 34C, and boast the highest iron content in Egypt. Reddish in colour, the water pours into two large basins where those suffering from skin diseases immerse themselves.

There is a small hotel and a number of chalets.
Contact: 092/940407

Kharga Oasis:
The Beau Lake spring, about 25km south of El-Kharga City, is sought out by those suffering from skin diseases. Treatment of rheumatic pain by burying in the sand is also available.
Contact: 092/901611

Nasser Tourist Springs, 20km south of El Kharga city, has three springs of different depths and temperatures for the treatment of painful joints and skin diseases. There are a number of chalets in the vicinity.
Contact: 092/901611



هكذا من الأصل



Exploring Ibn Tulun Mosque in the Old City photo: Sherif Sonbol

Off the beaten track

As old sites and new discoveries emerge from the darkness, there is now more to see and explore than the standard fare

The publicity surrounding the opening up of new sites has already earned Egypt huge dividends in terms of tourist revenue. According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) report issued last month, the bulk of the tourism growth in the Middle East during 1994 was due to a strong comeback by Egypt.

The report said Egypt managed to boost tourism through an aggressive marketing campaign abroad, keeping up with the latest travel trends.

Including unexplored sites on tourist itineraries is among the chief travel trends Egypt is now pursuing to entice more travellers. And, as one official at the Ministry of Tourism puts it, the newly revised itineraries cater for different cultures and individual interests.

This winter season, the peak time for tourism, travellers will have access to some sites which have been inaccessible for almost a century.

Itineraries offered by travel agencies now include newly opened sites at Mit Rahina, the ancient capital, the monasteries of Wadi Natroun in the Western Desert, and new tombs in the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens. They also include the monuments of Nubia and a Lake Nasser cruise.

As Upper Egypt continues to yield new discoveries, interest is bound to focus on the south.

In the Valley of the Kings, where more has yet to be discovered in that much-explored area, visitors this winter will be able to see the most recent discovery: Tomb 5, where the mausoleum of Ramses II's 55 sons was unearthed by American archaeologist Kent Weeks five months ago. The discovery received wide media coverage around the world. According to Weeks, this is the first multiple burial of royal children to be unearthed. In fact, Weeks adds, "there are hardly any traces of pharaohs' children in many of the most explored areas of the Valley of the Kings."

Although the tomb is not officially opened, hundreds of visitors insist on a glimpse of the site where Ramses' children are buried.

"Every day throughout the summer, dozens of tourists queue up for a glimpse of the tomb," said Sabri Abdel-Aziz of the valley's inspectors team. "It even attracted more tourists than Tutankhamun's tomb despite the fact that it contains no visual attractions like the rest of the tombs in the valley." Abdel-Aziz added that the discovery has brought huge dividends in terms of increased tourism in Luxor.

"It was a hot season in terms of the weather and tourist influx," he said.

In Luxor and just over the mountain from the Valley of the Kings, tourists will enjoy visiting many newly-restored tombs.

One is at long last scheduled to open to the public for the first time since its discovery almost a century ago. It is the tomb of King Ramses II's favourite wife Nefertari (which means the most beautiful). It will be inaugurated next month.

"The tomb is the most spectacular in Egypt with colours as fresh as if painted yesterday", said Mohamed El-Saghir, head of Egyptian antiquities at the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA.)

A limited number of tourists will have access to the tomb at any time, and then only after donning masks in order to control humidity. The entry ticket will be $30.

The monuments of Nubia, near the High Dam and along the shores of Lake Nasser, are among the places being promoted. Tourist agents are recommending, for this winter season, a Lake Nasser cruise. This new travel trend is bound to develop rapidly. Many Nubian temples salvaged and reconstructed on the shore have never been opened to the public previously.

Apart from the well-known Temple of Abu Simbel, other temples were built at Wadi Al-Sebou and Al-Derr. The former was converted into a church during the Christian period. Lesser-known temples that were also saved include the 18th Dynasty temple at Dakka and the Temple of Amada.

Nubia was *terra incognita* for almost 25 years because of its inaccessibility. This will now change. On 15 November the first 'Nubian Sea' cruise will set off to tour Lake Nasser. Youssef Khalef, the Lebanese owner of the cruiseline said that it is fully booked for the winter season.

Travellers heading for Upper Egypt may like to know that Sohag and Akhmim are no longer off limits. The area offers at least 6,000 years of uninterrupted history. Starting in November, tourists will be allowed access to its open air museum which contains impressive monuments from the Ramesside period as well as Coptic and Greco-Roman relics. The masterpiece is a magnificent 11m high statue of Merit-Amun, one of the beloved daughters of Ramses II and the entry ticket is LE10.

Moving northwards to the Western Desert, Wadi Al-Natroun is a site with great tourist potential. It lies 75km north of Cairo off the Cairo-Alexandria desert road and was one of the most famous sites in Christiandom during the 4th and 5th centuries. Of more than 100 monasteries which once existed in the depression, only four have survived and now are part of the regular tourist itinerary.

Another site that is now being actively developed is Mit Rahina, the site of the ancient capital of Memphis, some 30km south of Giza. Its main attraction to date has been a colossus of Ramses II lying in a special shelter in the museum compound. Plans are well underway to turn the site into a tourist complex which will include the museum itself, the house of sacred Apis bulls with alabaster mummification beds, the Temple of Hathor and a shrine with statues of Seti I.

Zahi Hawwass, the Giza plateau director, expects Memphis — when opened to visitors — to rival Saqqara. "Tourists should know by now that Giza and Saqqara are not the only sites but that there are many delights around Memphis which remain unexplored," he said.

At Abu Sir, between Giza and Saqqara, there is another newly-opened site. Tourists will be able to trace the funeral procession of a 5th dynasty king from his pyramid, and along a causeway linking the Mortuary Temple to the Valley Temple. The royal complex is the most complete and preserved of all 5th Dynasty royal monuments at Abu Sir.

In the Mediterranean city of Alexandria newly-opened sites include Kom Al-Nadura, an archeologically rich area with Fatimid and Mamluke monuments which were previously in a military area.

With the number of tourists interested in seeing new or off-the-beaten-track monuments on the rise, many travel agencies are catering for a more discriminating audience. Today's travellers, said one travel agent, are keen to squeeze in time to visit at least one nontraditional site, despite usually heavy schedules.

Perhaps one of the greatest dilemmas facing tourists to Egypt is what exactly to see in the time available. Certainly they can never see it all at one time. And here tourist strategy steps in: see all you can, and then come again to see the rest.

Golden years for museums

Much attention has been paid to upgrading Egyptian museums in recent years, and developing new ones

Museums are not only places for the display of artefacts and a record of national heritage, but they are essential for education as well. For that reason, the Egyptian Museums Department has paid much attention to their development in recent years. The last decade is, in fact, regarded by many as the golden era for both old and new museums.

In addition to long-established museums like the Egyptian Museum of Pharaonic Antiquities in central Cairo, the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo, and the Islamic Museum in Bab Al-Khalq Square, the Post Office Museum in central Cairo has been upgraded, the Agricultural Museum in Giza has been completely renovated; the Jewellery Museum in Alexandria has just been opened and the Greco-Museum (Alexandria), has recently had an overhaul. Numerous provincial museums have been renovated and spruced up.

Egypt has come a long way since the French scholar Auguste Mariette founded the Egyptian Museum in 1902; the Islamic Museum opened its doors in 1903, and Morcos Semaika, a wealthy Copt, opened the Old Wing of the Coptic Museum in 1908. The Mahmoud Mokhtar museum displays the work of modern artists, the Mahmoud Khalil Museum on the banks of the Nile at Giza has a collection of modern European paintings. Moreover historic buildings are being converted into national libraries and specialised museums.

Cairo Museum of Antiquities heads the list of museum destinations. Its splendid wrought-iron gate gives access to a well laid-out garden where there is a fountain, papyrus and lotus plants. In the garden, the newly renovated mausoleum of Mariette is situated. It is shaped like a sarcophagus of the sacred Apis bulls, whose tombs were discovered in Memphis, and the bronze statue of Mariette himself is surrounded by 22 busts of other famous Egyptologists.

One of the main attractions of the museum itself, apart from the Tutankhamun collection, Old Kingdom masterpieces like the diorite state of Khafre, the famous seated scribe, and a statue of King Pepi I in a huge portrayal in beaten copper, is the newly opened, dimly-lit mausoleum of mummies. This is especially attractive to those with a taste for the macabre. And for others, anxious to make valuable use of time, replicas, books, and video tapes of the museum's artifacts and souvenirs can be found in shopping outlets on each side of the entrance doorway.

Mohamed Saleh, director of the museum, has come up with many innovative ideas for benefit of the general public, not the least of which is a special display, "Masterpiece of the month" to highlight worthy objects.

The Coptic Museum in Old Cairo provides a bridge between the Egyptian Museum and its Pharaonic objects, and the Islamic Museum with its exhibits that date from the Arab conquest. The museum boasts the largest number of early Christian artifacts in the world; some 114,000 are on display.

Maher Salib, general director of the Coptic Museum, which is now undergoing restoration, said that the old wing is as much a museum piece as the objects it usually contains. "Now the objects have been removed to the new wing while the old wing's fine wooden ceilings, arches and beautiful tiled work and mashrabeya collected from old Coptic houses are being conserved.

The exhibits in the Coptic Museum range from stone and woodwork, to textiles, illuminated manuscripts and metalwork. In addition, there are ecclesiastical furniture and clothing, icons, domestic implements and pottery.

The Museum of Islamic Art exhibits a rare collection reflecting different eras, not only in Egypt but other Islamic countries a well. There are over 90,000 objects that cover a period between the seventh and 19th centuries. "Objects in the museum come from excavations and collections," said Hassan El-Kassass, director for research and scientific publications at the museum, "as well as gifts and purchases". During its most recent renovation, in 1983, the number of exhibition halls was increased from 23 to 25.

The Omayyed hall has fine pottery and bronze collections. There are fine artifacts of the Abbasid Dynasty, and, from the Fatimid period, gypsum pictures found at a public bath in Aboul Soud Street in Cairo, as well as fine tapestry woven with the names of Fatimid khalifs.

One of the newest museums is to be found in Alexandria. **The Jewellery Museum** is housed in the converted palace of Fatma El-Zahraa, a member of the Egyptian royal family. It is an elegant structure built in the 19th century in rococo style, and the collection comprises 415 unique pieces of jewellery accumulated by Mohamed Ali and his descendants until the time of Farouk, who was overthrown in 1952. Among the richest and most elegant objects are those that belonged to Queen Farida and King Farouk. Among them is a golden chess board decorated with diamonds and precious stones, one of the most impressive pieces on display.

The Ethnographic Museum on Qasr Al-Aini Street was originally part of the Egyptian Geographical Society founded by the Khedive Ismail in 1875. Its six halls are devoted to the exhibition of relics and objects of everyday life: furniture, agricultural tools, utility objects, clothing and even toys. Model scenes of important social and festive occasions are especially interesting, as is the *hamam al-talat*, public bath for ladies on Tuesdays.

The museum has a special hall devoted to collections from African countries, and another containing maps and illustrations of various stages in the construction and inauguration of the Suez Canal.

The Agricultural Museum in Dokki has one of the world's most comprehensive collections of ancient organic exhibits, from rope used to haul colossi in ancient times, to human-shaped biscuits baked for children for Pharaonic feasts. Many of the artifacts have never before been seen by the public. Because the museum has not yet been officially opened, visitors can visit free of charge and enjoy seeing scale models of farmers, hunters, weavers, and artisans of various industries.

The little-visited **Post Office Museum**, built on the occasion of the tenth international post office conference in Cairo in 1934, has recently been upgraded. One of its halls features artifacts related to postal services from Pharaonic times through the Middle Ages to the present. Papyrus documents, inscribed pottery, camel bones and leather, all of which were used as writing materials during different eras, are all to be seen. Means of delivering mail at different periods is revealed all the way from the use of homing pigeons to aircraft. It shows that the earliest postmen travelled on foot to deliver mail.

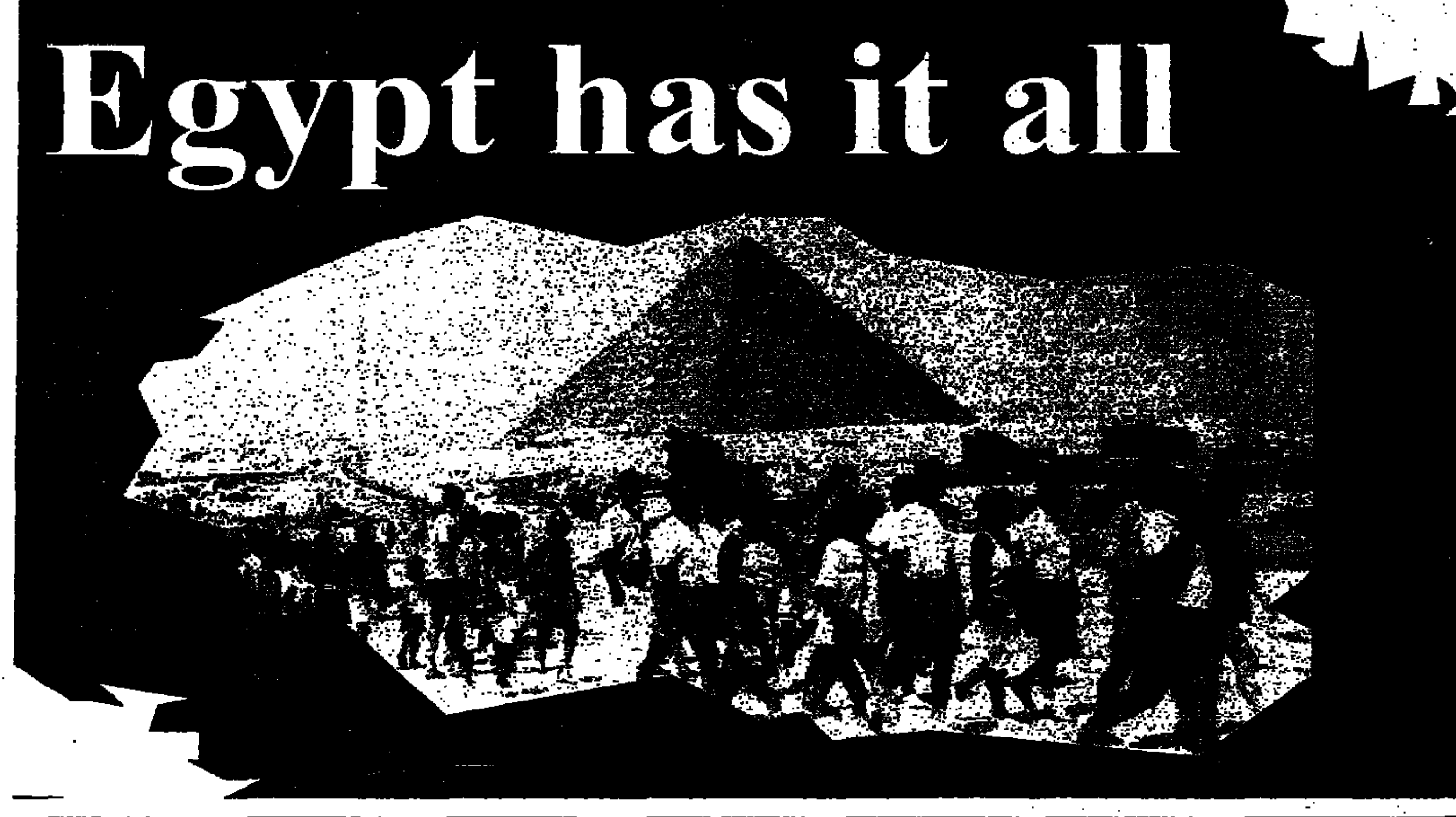
The Post Office Museum has a rare stamp collection and models of the pyramids and sphinx made entirely of coloured stamps.

In travelling around Cairo, modern masterpieces can be seen, among them the works of Mahmoud Mokhtar, a pioneer sculptor whose masterpieces such as the statue of Saad Zaghloul just off Qasr Al-Nil Bridge, and "The revival of Egypt" in front of Al-Gamaa bridge leading to Cairo University, are noteworthy.

Egypt offers cultural options to tourists, just as it markets optional destinations. From ancient arts and crafts to modern, the land of the Nile's rich heritage is preserved and safeguarded in museums that frequently, themselves, are part of the heritage.

On World Tourism Day celebrations at the Cairo International Conference Centre, Nile Bukhara, an Indian restaurant in Maadi, was awarded a certificate of appreciation for its outstanding performance, which helped tourism in Egypt. Mr Oberoi, the owner of Taj Mahal and Nile Bukhara (Indian restaurants in Cairo) received the certificate from Mr Mamdouh El-Beltagui, minister of tourism.

From the Mediterranean to Nubia, from Sinai to Rafah, Egypt's diverse attractions lure tourists all the year round



The ancient Greeks and Romans were the earliest tourists to Egypt. They started a trend that continued through medieval and into modern times. Until recently these travellers have been attracted by Egypt's unparalleled historical attractions — the monuments of the Nile Valley, the *souks*, mosques and the *madrassas* of Islamic Cairo. But for today's tourists there is much more. The Ministry of Tourism has adopted the slogan "Egypt has it all", and visitors can now discover remote oases, go snorkelling and diving off the Red Sea coast, take camel trips into the mountains of Sinai and visit the Coptic monasteries of the Eastern Desert.

Most visitors begin their holiday in Cairo. Founded on the site of Babylon, near the ruins of ancient Memphis, it is Africa's largest city, and the metropolis and its environs contain some spectacular sites: the Pyramids of Giza, the funerary boat of King Khufu, the Sphinx, Saqqara, and Memphis. Many treasures from these and other sites are housed in Cairo's Egyptian Museum. Cairo's Islamic sites include Salaheddin's Citadel and the mosques of the Mamlukes and Ottoman sultans, including the mosque and *madrassa* of Sultan Hassan, Al-Nasir Barquq complex, Al-Azhar Mosque, Bab Zuwella, and the Mosque of Ibn Tulun. The Islamic Museum contains a remarkable collection of Islamic artefacts.

There are also reminders of Egypt's Christian heritage. Early Christian monasteries and churches in old Cairo include Al-Moallaqa — the "hanging church", the church of St. Mercurius (Abu Sefein), and the convent of St George (Mari Girgis). The Coptic Museum houses the finest collection of Coptic antiquities in the world.

Travelling south from Cairo, the Nile Valley with its ancient monuments, Nile cruises and *feluccas* is another major attraction, and Luxor, described by Homer as "the hundred-gated Thebes", is the world's largest open-air museum.

On the east bank of the Nile lie Luxor and Karnak temples. The former is called "the harem of the south" and is dedicated to the Theban triad, Amun, Mut and Khonsu. The latter, known in ancient Egypt as "Iput-Isut" is built on a massive scale, covering a hundred acres. At night, near the sacred lake in Karnak Temple, the Sound and Light show is presented, telling the story of Karnak in English, French, German and Japanese.

On the west bank of the Nile is the City of the Dead: the Tombs of the Nobles, the valley's of the Kings and Queens and numerous mortuary temples.

Luxor is an ideal base for day trips to Esna and Dendera. At Esna, the traveller can see the Temple of Khnum, the ram-headed creator god and Deir Al-Shuhada, "the monastery of three thousand six hundred martyrs", which was built in the 4th century and contains two churches; the walls of one of which is covered with vibrant 10th century murals.

At Dendera, the Temple of Hathor is dedicated to the cow-headed goddess. This Greco-Roman temple is famous for its astronomical ceiling, painted with symbols of the heavenly bodies. The original is in the Louvré.

Egypt's southernmost city, Aswan, has the loveliest setting on the Nile and a languorous ambiance. Days can be spent strolling up and down the corniche watching sailboats etch the sky with their tall masts, or sitting in floating restaurants listening to Nubian music and eating freshly-caught fish.

In Aswan, tourists can visit Elephantine and Kitchener islands, the Aga Khan Mausoleum, the unfinished obelisk, the Tombs of the Nobles and the High Dam. From Aswan, the island-temples of Philae and Kalabsha, and the rock-hewn Temple of Abu Simbel, are also accessible.

The oases of the Western Desert are scattered across a vast, awesomely desolate region, which has recently become accessible to tourists. Siwa, towards the Libyan border, has a unique culture and history.

In the new valley oases of Bahariya, Farafra, Dakhla and Kharga, visitors can enjoy the tranquillity of Bedouin lifestyle. The region's inhabitants depend on springs and wells which tap water under the desert.

Bahariya oasis is surrounded by black hills made of ferruginous quartzite and dolorite. Bawati, the largest village in the oasis, is characterised by its picturesque hillside quarter which overlooks lush palm groves irrigated by the Ain Al-Beshmo, a natural spring exposed by cutting away the rocks in Roman times.

Farafra, known as the Land of the Cow in Pharaonic times, is a single, simple village. The most isolated of the new valley oases, it is renowned for its strong traditions and the piety of its people.

Dakhla Oasis is a collection of 14 different settlements, dominated on its northern horizon by a wall of rose-coloured rock. The capital Mut, named after the ancient goddess of the Theban triad, houses the Museum of Inheritance, a traditional house with an intricate wooden combination lock. Dakhla's village of Bashandi is well-known for its Islamic cemetery and temple of Deir Al-Hagar.

Kharga was once the last but one stop on the "forty days" road, the route of the infamous slave-trade between North Africa and the tropical south. Outside the main centre is the Temple of Hibis, built on the site of an 18th Dynasty temple by Saites, Persians and Ptolemies.

Also in the Western Desert lies Fayoum, in a depression about 103km southwest of Cairo. Sites include the pyramids of Hawara and Al-Lahun, the pyramid base of Amenemhet III, and an obelisk of Senusert, all dating to the 12th Dynasty. There are also Greco-Roman, Coptic and Islamic monuments. The Fayoum is endowed with natural springs, Lake Qarun, and the famous water wheels of Fayoum City.

Moving to the Mediterranean, Egypt's second city, Alexandria boasts a string of beaches and excellent sea food restaurants.

But Alexandria has much more to offer than seaside attractions. There are Graeco-Roman monuments such as Pompei's pillar, the Roman amphitheatre, the catacombs of Kom Al-Shoqafa, the tombs of Al-Anfushi, Al-Shatbi necropolis, as well as the Mamluke fort of Qait Bey and the Mosque of Mursi Abul-Abbas. Alexandria is also known for its museums: the Graeco-Roman, Royal Jewellery, Fine Arts and Hydrobiological Museum.

Westward from Alexandria, beyond the World War II cemeteries of Al-Alamein, is the beach resort of Mersa Matrouh, the jumping off point for Siwa Oasis.

Heading east, the Sinai peninsula, edged by coral reefs teeming with tropical fish, offers superb snorkelling, diving and palmy beaches. In Al-Arish in North Sinai holidaymakers can swim off the shady palm-lined beaches of Al-Nakhil, Al-Masa'id and Rumana and enjoy the colours and workmanship of Bedouin crafts.

Ruins of ancient fortresses abound in North Sinai, including the fortresses of Al-Arish, Al-Farama and Nekhl. Also worth noting is the ancient Road of Horus, where several fortresses and fortified military towns stood between Qantara east of the city of Rafah. The road was used from the time of the pharaohs until the Ottoman era.

In South Sinai, Sharm Al-Sheikh, 336km from Suez, is known for the simple pleasures of sun, sea and sand, together with luxury five-star hotels, water sports, shopping and entertainment.

Ras Mohamed, 53km from Sharm Al-Sheikh, is a protected area where a traveller can dive into a paradise of coral gardens and tropical fish.

Mount Sinai and St Catherine's Monastery make interesting destinations. Built in the 6th century, the monastery was dedicated to the daughter of a ruler of Alexandria, who converted to Christianity and was subjected to great torture. The monastery is in a spectacular natural setting and contains priceless works of art.

Dahab, about 81km from Sharm Al-Sheikh, with its gleaming sand, clear waters and colourful marine life, is one of Sinai's most beautiful beaches, and has tourist villages, diving centres and camping sites to cater for visitors.

Eighty-seven kilometres from Dahab is Nuweiba, famous for camel and jeep treks into the desert, and diving and snorkelling. Taba, about 75km from Nuweiba, boasts an exquisite panorama of sea and mountains.

Egypt's Red Sea coast has more reefs further offshore, with snorkelling and diving centred around Hurgheda, 395km south of Suez. Tourists can take day trips to locations like Gifton Island for snorkelling and a fish barbecue. Day trips or longer safaris to explore the Red Sea Mountains by camel or jeep are also available. Safaga, 65km south of Hurghada, has also developed as a holiday area with several tourist villages and rest houses.

One of the major ports of the Red Sea, Al-Quseir, lies 80km south of Safaga. Today it is a quiet resort with sandy beaches, clear waters and coral reefs. An ancient caravan trail leads from Quseir through the mountains, passing several Pharaonic and Roman sites.

Mersa Alam, 135km south of Quseir, is the ideal base for a fishing holiday. There are also some fine offshore coral reefs and diving facilities are being developed in the area.

Inland, the mountainous Eastern Desert contains the Coptic monasteries of Saint Paul and Saint Anthony, Roman quarries, and other antiquities, and dramatic rockscapes seen by few apart from the nomadic Bedouin.

The 'wonderful' world of Tut

There is no need to go to Luxor to see Tutankhamun's tomb. A few kilometres south of Cairo is a brilliant replica, exactly resembling the tomb on the day of its discovery

The recreated tomb of Tutankhamun in Ragab's Pharaonic Village is the result of painstaking work by Hassan Ragab and a team of archeologists, architects and engineers. They tirelessly collaborated in producing a replica of the tomb as it was on the day of its discovery.

When archeologist Howard Carter first peered into the boy king's burial chamber over 70 years ago he was asked what he could see. His reply said it all: "Wonderful things". Indeed they were. The glint of gold before his eyes were treasures that had remained undisturbed for nearly 3,400 years.

Over a period of 11 years, Carter documented about 5,000 ancient masterpieces before they were transported to the Egyptian Museum where they are on display today. Now stripped, the small tomb in the Valley of the Kings, which has only one decorated chamber, is not always open to the public.

But the replica tomb, two kilometres south of Giza, is more impressive than the empty original because it is an accurate reconstruction, based on photographs and documentary evidence, of the tomb as it was on 26 November, 1922, when it was first opened.

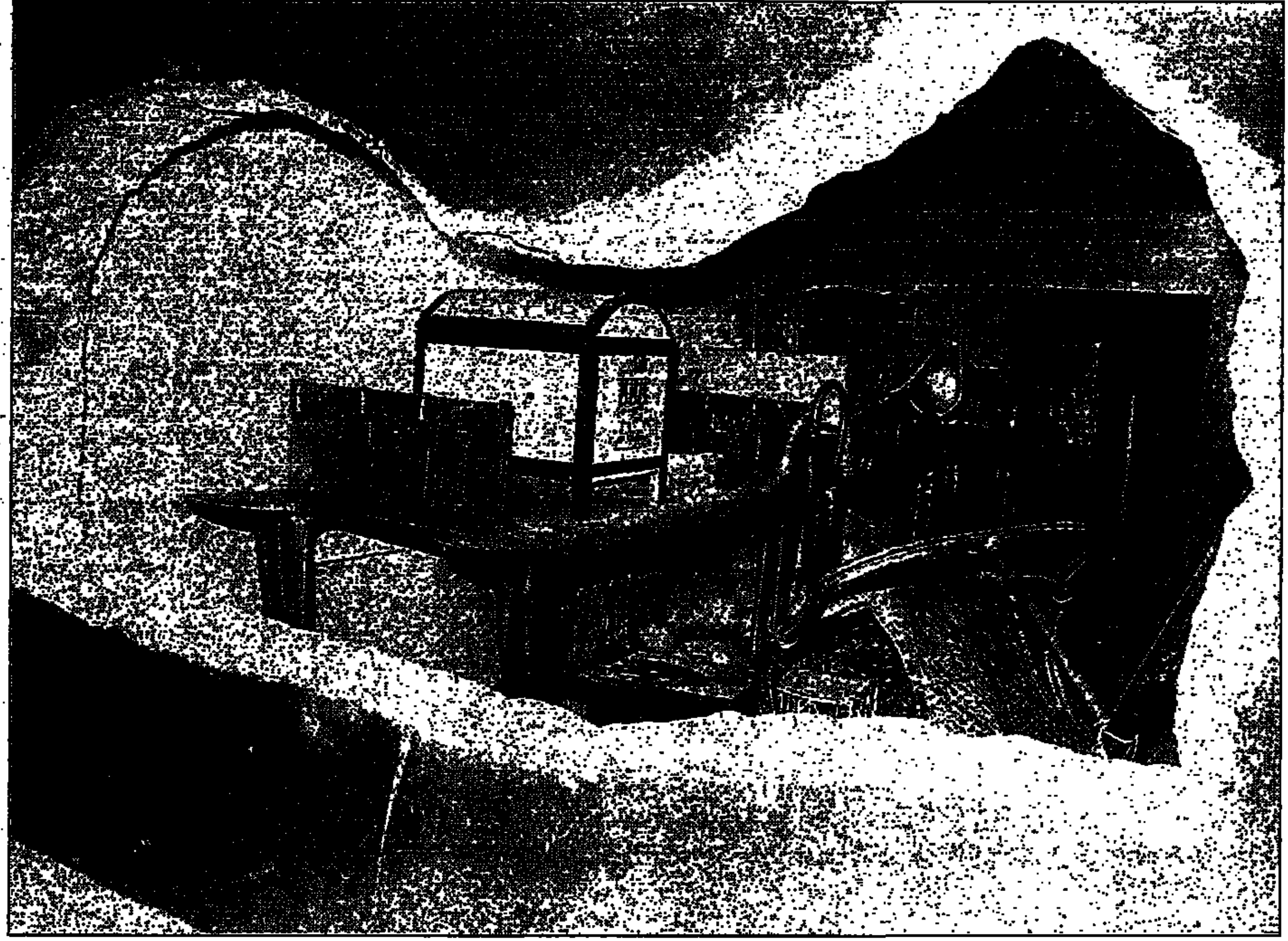
Replicas, which even experts could hardly distinguish from the originals, lie piled in the different chambers. Royal beds, state chariots, the golden throne and the gold-plated mummy case have been placed in the tomb as they were found, along with alabaster canopic jars, necklaces of precious and semi-precious stones and enormous gilded shrines which, like Russian dolls, contained other shrines, each tucked within the other.

In the Egyptian Museum, these objects have been placed in different rooms and cabinets. In the replica tomb, one can see them in their original disorder, giving the visitor a clear impression that the teenage god-king was buried in a hurry, as claimed by archeologists. This theory is substantiated by the fact that not all the chambers were decorated and the objects were placed haphazardly.

Visitors to the Egyptian Museum often comment: How could all these treasures have been buried in so tiny a tomb, the smallest in the Valley of the Kings? Ragab's reconstruction is the best visual aid for appreciating the way the provisions for the king's afterlife were crammed in on top of each other.

The replica tomb also recreates the sense of secrecy that surrounded the original site. Visitors are guided up a stairway, before descending into the tomb. Proceeding along a corridor with side openings, it is possible to see into the chambers and admire the artefacts which range from carved animal heads, to an alabaster lamp shaped like lotus blossoms, baskets of dates and raisins, jars of wine sealed and stamped, and objects of ebony and ivory.

Some of Egypt's finest craftsmen were recruited to copy the treasures. Architects submitted their ideas about construction of the tomb, and electrical engineers dramatised the chambers using dim lighting. A visitor may discern no more than the glitter of a shrine, or the shadow of a goddess in one corner, while in another brighter light reveals bows, arrows, walking-sticks and even the fly whisk trimmed with ostrich feathers once held by the long-dead king.



Tutankhamun's treasures as seen on the day of discovery

photo: Tony Fares



photo: Mohamed Wesam

An artist working on a replica from the Tutenkhamun collection

Treading the new and virgin lands

As well-known tourist destinations in Egypt are starting to reach saturation point, investors are turning their sights on new and largely virgin land

Hurghada and Sharm Al-Sheikh used to be the most attractive areas for investment. Now, exploited to the full, new areas of natural and historical interest are being considered potential tourist resorts.

Adel Radi of the Tourist Development Authority (TDA), pinpointed the upcoming areas of high demand as: "Inland of the Aqaba Gulf, areas to the south of Hurghada from Quseir to Mersa Alam, Ain Sokhna and Ras Sidr in the Gulf of Suez."

Some regions, like the so-called Egyptian Red Sea Riviera, have already taken off. The planning stage is over, investors have claimed their stake, and work is scheduled to start early in 1996. Likewise, projects in the Upper and Lower Mahashi and El-Malha in the "middle sector" of the Aqaba Gulf are also about to be implemented.

These three centres in Sinai, which consist of 24 tourist projects covering an area of four million square metres, will provide 5,000 rooms, or about eight per cent of the total current hotel potential. But new areas are continuously opening up. These include areas along the Red Sea, in Fayoum governorate, and on the Mediterranean coast.

The Egyptian shore of the Red Sea, from Quseir to Marsa Alam, boasts some of the most spectacular scenery in the world. The Egyptian government is offering land for investors to build hotels, tourist villages, camping and sports sites.

In a report published by the TDA, the town of Bernice, south of Marsa Alam, has been selected as a world class international resort. The site for the proposed development encompasses a peninsula known as Ras Banas and the ruins of an ancient Ptolemaic city founded in 275 BC. Special care will be taken to preserve the environment and to integrate the man-made resorts with the mountains, desert and sea which form its backdrop. Bernice will be aimed at up-market tourists with a wider, more international appeal than other Red Sea resorts.

To the south of Bernice is Gebel Elba, a lush area of tropical vegetation which is a naturel reserve. It is the home of mountain lions, ostrich, monkeys and gazelles, and neighbouring mountains have emerald mines and historic ruins.

Investment opportunities in Fayoum, the great depression in the Western Desert, south of Cairo, have lagged behind, but are now receiving attention. In particular, the TDA has begun preparations of a preliminary plan for the development of sites on the shores of Lake Qarun and in the Al-Rayan Valley. The local attractions include many sites of historical interest, ranging from Pharaonic to Greco-Roman, Coptic and Islamic sites; while Lake Qarun and El-Rayan valley appeal to nature lovers attracted by bird and wildlife, and fishing opportunities.

Egypt's northern coast, which runs west of Alexandria as far as Salloum on the Libyan border, has been partly developed for seasonal domestic use. But there still remain hundreds of kilometres along the shore which are being studied as potential areas for international-standard year-round resorts. Three zones, in particular, have come under the spotlight: Sidi Abdel-Rahman, Ras Al-Hekma and Bagoush. Ras Al-Hekma — a peninsula and secluded bay — is a particularly attractive location. Plans are underway to develop it into a distinguished holiday resort for high class tourists, along with Bagoush which will also be used as a caravan site.

The TDA has jurisdiction over these investment zones. Its role is to help investors identify and pursue the various opportunities for tourism development. The TDA staff provide information and assistance from the earliest stages of project identification, to execution and operation.

MR Amr Abdel-Samie (director of sales and marketing for Accor Hotels in the Red Sea) is receiving the reward from his excellency the minister of tourism

Novotel Sharm Al-Sheikh has been rewarded the best 4 star hotel for the year 1994: 1995

Novotel Sharm Al-Sheikh has been nominated the best 4 star hotel for two years successsively. The choice simply interprets the excellent service, the best fod and the successful management visitors recieve at Novotel.

Situated in the middle of the picturesque and peaceful bay of Neame, 7 km fom the town centre, the hotel provides the best view in Sharm Al-Sheikh.

The private beach provides a vast swimming area. There is also an outdoor sweet water swimming pool. Novotel has a completely equipped diving centre as well as a windserf centre. The centres serve from biginners to top professional divers. Live-a-board is also available. Enjoy practising all acquatic sports; snorkling, canoeing, skiing, underwater photography, etc. Other activities such as beach volleyball, billiards, tennis, soccer and motorcydling increase your chance to spend a lovely time. Horse riding along the beach is another merrit.

Novotel provides the most spacious and cosiest rooms in Sharm. The beautiful view from your balcony is not the only advantage. All rooms have a satellite TV set with a video channel, individually controlled air condition, a direct dial international telephone, inhouse music and a mini fridge.

Food is but another big pleasure. The variety of restaurants provides a vast opportunity to satisfy all tastes: The Italian "Aldente" restaurant serves the best Italian dishes and pasteries, "Assala" restaurant for fresh fish and sea food and the "Black Coral" open buffet of international cuisine. In addition to a 24 hour coffee shop. Enjoy your favourite drink at one of the two cosy and candle light bars.

The sun, sea and sand dunes compose a colourful painting which embraces the Holiday Village hotel. The hotel occupies the most picturesque view at one of the calmest and most beautiful lagoons of Dahab which is a small seaside resort known for its mysterious beauty and tranquility.

The 900m long private beach provides a vast domain for all lovers of water sports. There are no limits to the activities you can enjoy. You name it, you find it. Lovers of acquatic sports should not lose the chance. snorkling, skiing, diving, canoeing, saililng quad-running and underwater photography are in the bargin.

Don't miss to enjoy the taste of the delicious food served at the international cuisine, the fish restaurant and the Pizzeria.

The sunset at Holiday Village hotel certainly has a different tast. The secne is best viewed at the Sunset terrace where you can have your best drink and listen to the softest tunes.

The Holiday Village hotel is designed to fit all vacationeers budgets with its 3 categories room: deluxe, superior and standard. The deluxe rooms provide the closest view of the sea shore, a satellite T.V set, inhouse music, a private bath and a mini fridge. Except for the TV and the mini fridge, the standard rooms are as equally a perfect choice.

Novotel provides a two free chuttle buses to and fro Sharm Al-Sheikh and Dahab. Have the chance to book in one and feel free to enjoy the privilage of the other. The journey will not take but 50 minutes.

Don't forget to book for the Galaxy Dinner, available each Tuesday. The offer includes a drive to the middle of the desert where you will enjoy the taste of the international open buffet and its special dish, an orientally barbecued "Ouzy" lamb. The journey also include a folkloric dance show, a belly dancer and a horse band show.



Shopping in the Khan Al-Khalili photo: Sherif Sonbol

Shop till you drop

From traditional tentmaking to designer clothes, Cairo's shops and markets cater for all tastes

Souvenir buying is an essential item on most visitors' itinerary, and Cairo's shopping facilities, ranging from medieval *souks* to modern malls, have something for everyone.

For many, shopping in Cairo means Khan Al-Khalili. The market, which takes its name from Khalil, a master of horses who founded a *caravanserai* in the area in 1382, is a maze of specialised bazaars — including areas dedicated to gold, silver, tentmaking and *appliqué work, and tourist souvenirs — where the* atmosphere of a medieval *souk* lives on.

Those in search of mementoes often choose Egyptian alabaster, ranging from ashtrays and vases to pyramids. There is also plenty of brass and copperware, and it is not all modern. A little removed from the modern brassware are shops full of age-darkened metal. A wide variety of carpets and rugs is sold, either woven or made with the knotting technique. Carpets range from bedouin rugs in plain and geometric patterns to camel hair kilims and rugs depicting Egyptian rural scenes, and are made of wool, cotton or silk. *Galabeyas* made of cotton, cotton mix or silk, are also found.

Leather travel bags, *poufs*, handbags, jackets and wallets are made of cow, buffalo, sheep, camel, gazelle or reptile skin. Prices vary according to the standard of tanning as well as the quality of leather.

Khan Al-Khalili is a centre for the Egyptian gold trade. Gold is sold by weight, and a charge for workmanship *is added to the official price. Cartouches* — an oblong with a name written on it in hieroglyphics — are particularly popular with tourists. Prices vary according to the quantity of gold used and whether the characters are engraved or glued on.

There is also a vibrant market in precious stones, which are imported from all over the world and sold by the gramme. Semi-precious Egyptian stones like lapis lazuli and turquoise are good buys.

A wide variety of both new and antique silverware from all over Egypt, including bedouin, Nubian and Siwan objects, can be found in the Khan, ranging from tiny earrings to large platters. All except very old pieces are government-stamped, showing the year of manufacture and the grade of silver. Some of the larger objects, especially platters, are silver-plated.

The traditional crafts of tentmaking and appliqué work are practised in the tentmakers bazaar, Souk Al-Khayamiya, in a few tiny workshops which double as shops inside the Qasaba, near Bab Zuweila. Wall hangings, cushion covers and bedspreads are produced in pictorial, Pharaonic or Islamic designs. More intricately-designed wall hangings or bedspreads can take up to six weeks to produce. Again, prices vary according to the size and intricacy of the work.

Away from Khan Al-Khalili are the purely touristic markets of the Pyramids area. Numerous bazaars dot the Pyramids Road. The village of Nazlet Al-Semmam at the foot of the Giza plateau can supply the souvenir hunter with brass, *copper and silver objects as well as paintings*, mostly inspired by tomb scenes of ancient Egypt and the afterlife.

Venture a little further out of Cairo and you will find some of Egypt's most beautiful carpets, rugs and tapestries. Kerdassa, a village which was the starting point for camel caravans crossing the Western Desert *to Libya in past centuries, lies north of Giza. Famous* for its textiles and carpets, shops in the village also sell leather, copper and brassware. And, south of Giza, on the Saqqara Road, is Harraniya village, where children produce beautiful tapestries woven from pure vegetable-dyed wool, using traditional weaving techniques. Their skills and talents have received worldwide recognition and their work is expensive. But for those who can't afford it, cheaper but nonetheless attractive imitations are available elsewhere.

For antique buyers and browsers, there is a wide range of antique shops all over the city. In Maadi, Al-Safa sells furniture, silver, glassware and miscellaneous small items. Patu Antiques, behind the military hospital on the Cairo-Maadi corniche sells old ironwork and bric-à-brac, plus a variety of gramophones, Sherif Street in the downtown area has several shops selling furniture and and bric-à-brac. In Zamalek, Atrium sells furniture, porcelain and beaten silver, Avenue 30 specialises in English antiques, and Noubia Antiquaire in furniture, silver, china, porcelain, glass and carpets. In Heliopolis Ashraf and Khalid specialise in antique brass beds, while Sucasb has a good selection of Syrian inlaid pieces. Those in search of modern workmanship will find excellent copies of French furniture at Hamdi Fayeq in Heliopolis and Al-Ein gallery has reproductions of antique brass lamps, arabesque furniture and antique jewellery, as well as jewellery in original designs. There are many similar shops in Dokki and Mohandessin.

Apart from antiques and traditional crafts, Egypt has some very modern shopping facilities. Travellers are often surprised at the fashion-consciousness of those Egyptians who can afford to buy their clothes from Benetton, Venti, Mexx, El-Kawwas, Marie Louis, Octopus and Mix and Match.

Shops like these have changed the face of the Egyptian fashion industry. "When we opened nine years ago our clothes sold like hot cakes because there was so little competition. Since then, there has been a great *influx of fashionable clothes," said Shahira Fahmy*, the owner of Mix and Match, which, unlike some of the other chains, is an Egyptian company.

Many branches of these new shops are located in Cairo's new shopping malls, together with shops specialising in upmarket shoes, bags, lingerie, sunglasses, cotton products and other consumer goods. The Yamama Centre, World Trade Centre, *Ramsis Hilton* Trading Annex, Noha Centre and the Mira Centre are just some fo the malls which have sprung up in Cairo's more affluent areas.

The idea of shopping under one airconditioned roof is certainly appealing, both to visitors and Egyptians. And while tourists from Europe and the United States may rush to soak up the atmosphere of Khan Al-Khalili, those from Arab countries are more likely to head for the malls. "Shoppers can compare prices and quality under one roof. Moreover, there are no parking problems because most of the malls have special multi-storey garages," Fahmy explained. While high-fashion shops like Mix and Match tend to be patronised by westerners and Egyptians, Fahmy stressed the malls' popularity with Arab visitors.

The larger malls are a self-contained world of their own. "We have 250 shops, as well as a coffee shop on the first floor and entertainment facilities on the seventh floor, including a 1,000-seat cinema, a theatre and a MacDonald's restaurant, as well as a billiard hall," said Fawzi Hamed, manager of the Ramsis Hilton mall. "People can spend all day here, have breakfast in the cafeteria, spend the day shopping, go to the cinema, have something to eat at MacDonalds, and then go to the theatre until 3am."

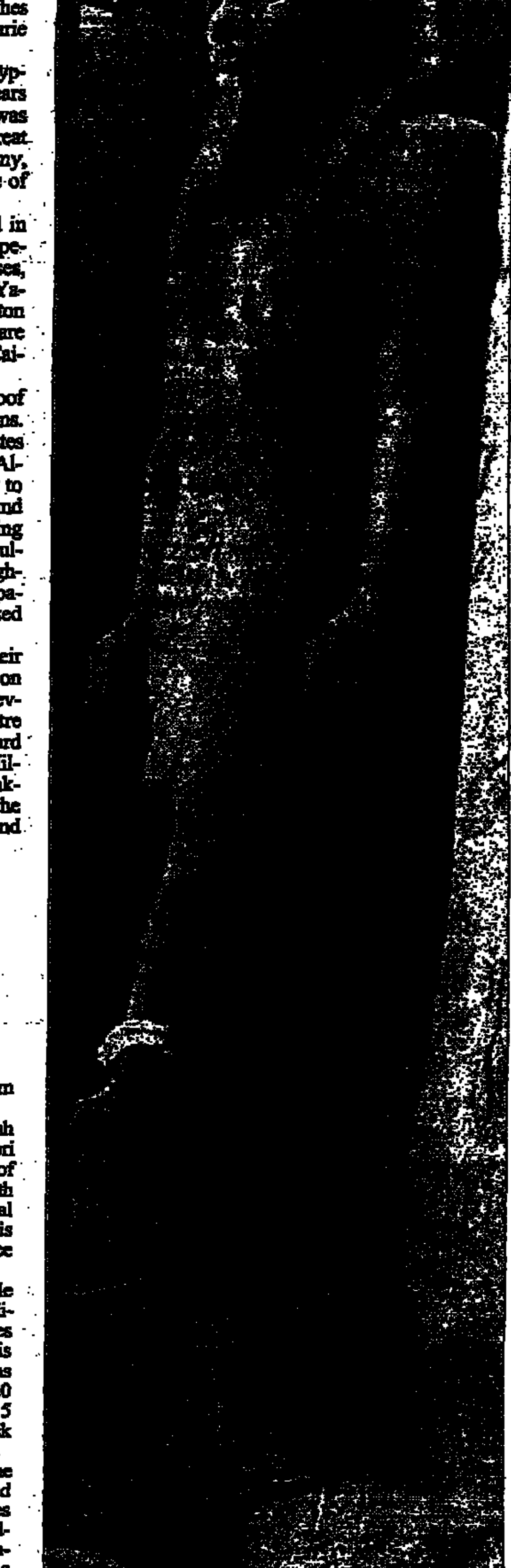


photo: Sherif Sonbol

Roaming Cairo

Cairo offers a range of sightseeing programmes taking in world famous Pharaonic monuments, temples, museums, medieval mosques and churches, as well as lesser known sites

A few hours can be spent at the **Cairo Tower** on the island of Gezira. The 187-metre-high tower gives spectacular views of the teeming city and visitors can enjoy a meal or a cup of tea in one of a number of restaurants. Open daily from 9am un*til midnight, the tower's entrance fee for foreign*ers is LE8.

If you have no time for the pharaonic sites of Cairo, Luxor or Aswan, try paying a visit to the **Pharaonic Village** on Jacob's Island, 2kms south of Giza Bridge on Al-Bahr Al-Azam Street. Visitors tour the village on a floating amphitheatre which takes them through the 'canal of mythology' and past actors depicting scenes from ancient Egyptian life. For antiquities lovers, the village includes a replica of Tutankhamun's tomb and its contents. The village is open from 9am to 4pm in winter, and from 9am to 9pm in summer.

Another site worth seeing is the **Nilometre** at the southern tip of Roda Island. Built in 861BC, it was used to measure the height of the Nile and forecast the outcome of the annual harvest. Adjoining it is the Manesterli Palace, now an arts and crafts centre displaying objects inspired by ancient times. The Nilometre is open from 9am to 4pm and the admission fee is LE 3.

For those interested in modern history, the **October War Panorama**, opened in 1989, is an interesting jaunt. War films are screened there daily and the entrance fee is LE8. The panorama is on Salah Salem Street, Heliopolis, and is open daily except Tuesdays. The films are shown at 9:30am, 11am, 12:30pm, 5pm and 6:30pm.

Nature lovers should take a look around the **International Park** in Nasr City where various countries including the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Kuwait, Germany, Japan, and the USA have their own displays, featuring floral representations of their most famous monuments. *America's Statue of Liberty, France's Bois de* Boulogne, and the United Arab Emirates' Abu Dhabi waterfall are all there, to name but a few. It is open daily except Tuesdays. The entrance fee is PT50.

If you want to combine nature and history, head for the **Zoological Garden** which is the world's third largest city zoo, covering 83 feddans. It is situated 5kms south of central Cairo, near the west bank of the Nile in Giza and is easily reached by public transport. The zoo, one of the oldest public gardens in Egypt, was converted from a royal garden during the rule of Khedive Tawfik and opened to the public in March 1891.

The Khedive imported rare plant and animal species from all over the world, and the zoo contains a large number of animal and bird life, particularly African breeds. Its star attractions include a rare black eagle, brought to the zoo in 1891, and a giant tortoise believed to be a gift from Empress Eugenie of France to Khedive Tawfik and now past its 200th birthday. The entrance fee is PT10. It opens daily from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm.

After touring the zoo, you might want to cross the street to visit the **Orman Gardens**. Laid out in 1875 on a 30-feddan area, this was once the private garden of Prince Hussein Kamel, and includes a large number of imported trees and decorative plants. The gardens are open daily from 9am to 4pm, and the admission fee is PT50.

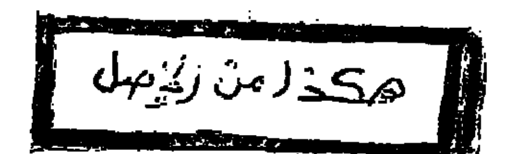
Still on a nature trail, those interested in fish should go the **Fish Gardens** on Hassan Sabri Street, Zamalek. The gardens once formed part of *the grounds of* a royal palace and include a 19th century grotto where various species of tropical fish are housed in large acquaria. The garden is open daily from 9am to 3:30pm, and the entrance fee is PT50.

For an afternoon or early evening outing, Nile sailing is a must. Visitors can hire a **felucca** (traditional sail boat) from a number of mooring sites located along the Nile from outside the Semiramis Hotel to the northern tip of Roda Island. Feluccas can seat eight people and charge between LE20 and LE30 per hour. Cheaper boats, charging LE15 an hour can be found between the Maspero dock and the Sixth of October Bridge.

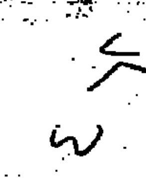
For a spot of culture, the **Opera House** is the best place to go. *located on Gezira Island beyound* Qasr Al-Nil bridge, this modern complex houses several galleries including the Museum of Modern Art, restaurants and concert halls. The seven-storey Opera House building also includes a 1,200-seat theatre, used for international opera, ballet and classical music performances. It also has a small hall, seating 500 spectators, and a third open air area with 1,000 seats.

For night fun and entertainment Cairo has a variety of **amusement parks**, the best of which are Cookie Amusement Park near the Giza pyramids and Sindbad Park near Cairo Airport. The latter has bumper cars, slides and lots of rides for tots.

Supplement edited by **Jill Kamil** and **Helen Miles**. Reporters; **Rehab Saad**, **Omayma Abdel-Latif**, **Nevine El-Aref** and **Sherine Nasr**







Close up

Salama A. Salama

The elephant and the ant

Colonel Gaddafi, during a press conference held on the Egyptian-Libyan border, called for other Arab states to follow Libya's example and expel Palestinians.

The Libyan leader based his call on what, at first sight at least, might appear to be a logical argument. If peace has finally been achieved, as everyone claims, then why should Palestinians not return to their homes? Since Arafat has embraced Yitzak Rabin, how could the latter have any objection to Palestinians returning?

Obviously Gaddafi realises that peace, in any meaningful sense of the word, has not yet been achieved.

The agreement recently signed in Washington for the extension of Palestinian self-rule is merely one stage in a peace process whose success or failure depends on the Palestinians' ability to close their ranks and create the infrastructures around which a state can be built.

The judicious use of political and negotiating skills remains essential if the Palestinians are ever to extricate themselves from the historical quandary in which they have been stuck since the beginnings of the Arab-Israeli conflict. And that quandary, it must be said, has been aided and abetted by Arab leaders such as Colonel Gadaffi, who appear to believe that international conflicts can be resolved by speeches, conferences and a few failed terrorist acts.

The trials faced by Libya during the Lockerbie crisis are similar to those faced by the Palestinians throughout the 40 year long battle to achieve their inalienable rights. The difference is one of scale. The human, military and political scope of the two conflicts are vastly different: the Lockerbie incident, alongside the Palestinian struggle, might be compared to an ant standing next to an elephant, or to a slap in the face as opposed to a fully fledged military assault.

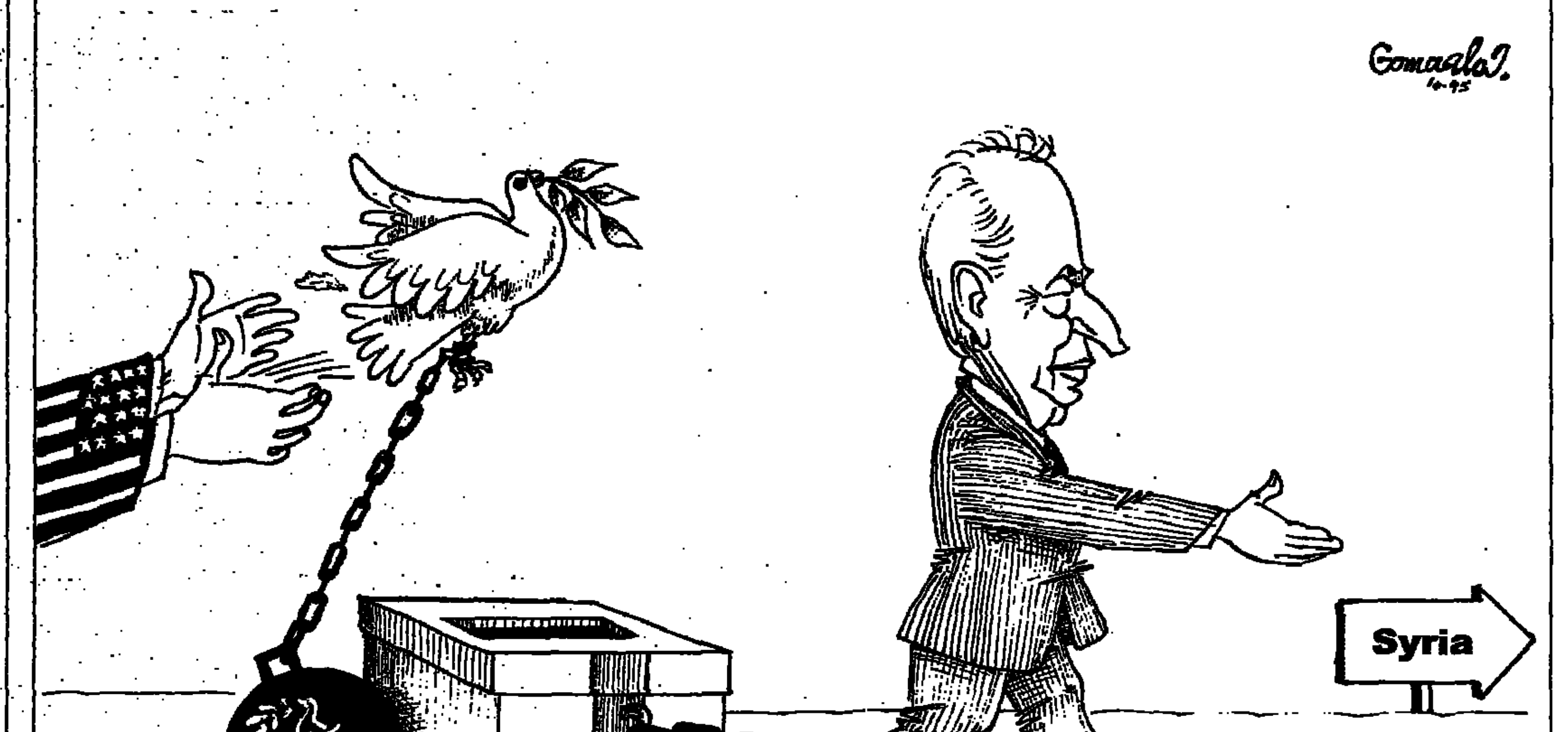
The Libyan leader, in the face of an international embargo the economic ramifications of which threaten the stability of his regime, reserves for himself the right to resort to diplomatic and political manoeuvres conceived within the logic of damage limitation. Gadaffi has made endless commitments and concessions. He has sought Arab, Western and even Israeli mediation in his search for acceptable solutions. At the same time he was ordering Palestinians out of Libya, obliging them to return to their country as an expression of *his* anger at the Palestinian-Israeli agreement, he was contacting London in the hope that he might trade information about Libyan arms supplies to the IRA for help in defusing the Lockerbie crisis.

The Colonel, it would seem, allows himself far more room for manoeuvre than he allows others. He employs the same tactics employed by Israel, using expulsion and expatriation as a means of pressuring the Palestinians.

For it is, after all, the Palestinians who will suffer from his actions. Such expulsions are hardly likely to force Israel to concede Palestinians' rights nor persuade the US or Britain to change their positions on the Palestinian tragedy. The most likely result is simply to back Arafat and the PNA further against the wall, forcing them to make more concessions to Israel.

Furthermore, Gaddafi's actions are likely to succeed in creating unwarranted problems along the Egyptian-Libyan border. They can only worsen relations between Egypt and Libya, at a time when Egypt is the only country that has stood by its neighbour.

Gaddafi has thus managed to present the international forces that are seeking to strangle his regime and topple him with a golden opportunity. He shares, it seems, the mentality and methods that forced the Palestinians into the dead end in which they find themselves. Wretched are those who do not learn from history.



Soapbox

A menacing masquerade

Recent revelations of the massacre of Egyptian POWs in the 1956 and 1967 wars have unveiled significant facets of the character of Israeli society. These atrocities were carried out by both rightist and leftist commanders, who now occupy prominent positions in Israel's political administration.

There is bitter irony in the fact that Aryeh Biro, the major culprit who made the disclosures, was himself a victim of Auschwitz. Ironical also is the fact that, in an attempt to diminish the immorality of these murders, Israel can resort to the argument that these were individual acts of violence carried out without written orders from the army's command.

But, Israel is well aware that atrocities of this magnitude were never known to be carried out on the strength of written orders, and this does not detract from the monstrosity of these crimes. Historians have long acknowledged that the Nazi crimes were not carried out on the strength of written orders.

The culprits were undoubtedly individuals and small groups, but they were also indoctrinated with Zionist ideology and spurred on by anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian sentiment.

The Egyptian position on such crimes must not stop at accepting apologies nor must Egypt be content with compensation. Efforts must be stepped up to bring the war criminals to justice in accordance with the Geneva Conventions, since even Israeli national law exempts war crimes from domestic statutes of limitation.

Focusing on compensation gives the false impression that obtaining a price on murdered POWs is Egypt's priority. The emphasis should rather be on unmasking the true nature of Zionist morality, and ensuring that just punishment is meted out to the war criminals.

The writer is an expert at Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies and editor of the monthly Israeli Digest.



Abdel-Alim Mohamed

The fundamentals of apartheid

A historic agreement? Well not quite. Eqbal Ahmad argues that the signing of the latest Israeli-Palestinian agreement on expanding self-rule in the occupied terriotories institutionalises dispossession rather than guaranteeing the eventual emergence of a Palestinian state

"Historic Israel, PLO, self-rule accord signed" read the banner headline of a Pakistani newspaper last Friday. The English language daily had merely echoed Bill Clinton who presided over the signing of the latest Israeli-Palestinian agreement. Two Arab leaders — President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and King Hussein of Jordan — were at hand as witnesses in the Oval Office. Yasser Arafat, looking subdued, pronounced the peace process irreversible and claimed that the accord would "definitely lead to a Palestinian state". Curiously, in the White House communiqué, this statement was dropped.

In New York Edward Said, an intellectual of great distinction and until recently viewed by the Western media as a Palestinian moderate, described the event as a "ludicrously inappropriate, manifestly unjust framework" which could yield nothing but inequality, pain and violence. The vast gap between the two positions — official and intellectual — is filled by a people in deep pain, in exile, under occupation, and still subject to expulsions, dispossession and colonisation. In the occupied West Bank Palestinian youngsters greeted the accord by risking their lives yet again with gestures of defiance; they threw stones at Israeli soldiers.

This latest "milestone", as Clinton would have it, on the road to peace was contrived two years and two weeks after the signing, also at the White House, of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles which defined the terms of Gaza's autonomy under the PLO and which serves as the framework for Israeli-PLO agreements. The terms of this accord are still secret but its basics are known and can be outlined thus: the Palestinian Self-Government Interim Authority shall be extended to seven West Bank towns. The Palestinian Authority will have a chief executive, legislature and a security force. Their powers as stated in the agreement are to tax Arab residents, police and administer justice to them, perform municipal functions for them, issue travel permits, regulate Arab commerce, maintain foreign currency reserves and — in prescribed areas — enter into international agreements.

The powers of the Palestinian Authority are circumscribed both by the accord and by Israel's continued military occupation of the West Bank. The agreement subordinates Palestinian institutions to their Israeli counterparts. It requires round-the-clock liaison between Palestinian officials and Israel at the national, regional and district levels, joint patrol of Arab areas, joint mobile units to quell disturbances by Arab inhabitants, and joint liaison bureaus at border crossings which will remain under Israel's control. Echoing official American and Israeli backgrounders, the media have pronounced this to be a major step towards Palestinian statehood. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the accord to support such a conclusion.

Some 200 Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories remain under Israel's rule and its military protection. As in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority will exercise no jurisdiction over the 320,000 plus Jewish settlers in the West Bank. Since 450 Zionist zealots have forcibly taken up residence among 120,000 Arab residents of Hebron, one of the seven towns covered by the agreement, the Israeli army will not withdraw from there, and will continue to underwrite the religious fanatics' occupation of a portion of the Ibrahimi Mosque. Will the Israeli army set up check posts and control entry/exits points into the towns under the Palestinian Authority, as it has done in Gaza? The agreement, I am told, is silent on this point. The matter, then, is left to Israel's discretion since it alone exercises residual powers.

The remainder of the West Bank stays under Israel's occupation and it alone holds responsibility for its external security, a primary attribute of sovereignty. In an innovation that must surely be the greatest 'historical' fig leaf of all, the Palestinian Authority is entitled to establish 25 police stations in Arab villages named in the agreement. Movement of Arab police officers outside their stations will be subject to "coordination and confirmation" by Israel. Lastly, it is to be noted that Jerusalem, the largest and most important town in the Occupied Territories, remains outside the 'historic' accord.

In Jerusalem, the Israeli government is tightening the noose in its attempt to suffocate the last signs of Arab life. After having been ringed by three layers of Jewish settlements, Arab Jerusalem is now subject to direct penetration. A large portion adjoining the Haram Al-Sharif, which used to be called the Jewish quarter before the creation of Israel, has been forcibly emptied of Arab residents. Jewish religious institutions and families now occupy the neighbourhood. In the rest of inner Jerusalem Jewish zealots, including General Ariel Sharon, have moved in, provocatively hoisting Israeli flags atop the homes they occupy. Palestinian institutions are being forced out of Jerusalem, and the Arab economy is being systematically strangled. The majority of Jerusalem's Christian residents have left the city. Increasingly impoverished Muslims are also leaving in desperation. The Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Countries do still make noises over Jerusalem but the truth is that the city sacred to three religions is now Israel's monopoly, and this reality will not change unless their rhetoric translates soon into concerted and meaningful policy.

The tragedy of Arabs and Muslims is that their leaders, who once opposed this sectarian state with overblown and vacuous rhetoric have now surrendered to it, under the American umbrella, in a mindless and abject fashion. And ironically the only organised resistance to Israel's fundamentalist Jewish agenda comes from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, fundamentalist Muslim parties. As Palestinians of the West Bank experience growing disillusionment and hardship they will become increasingly sympathetic to the two parties. And therein lies the root of fears that afflict both the US and its Arab allies.

The structure of PLO-Israeli agreements is such that Palestinian and Arab resistance must mount over time. The Oslo/Cairo/Taba accords together yield a peace which conforms to Israel's long held agenda, the creation in Eretz Israel of 'autonomous Arab islands in the Jewish sea'. The autonomy offered since Anwar El-Sadat's time has applied to people and not to the land they occupy. This was Zionism's dream plan, intended to keep the territories it coveted without inheriting the burden of the non-Jewish natives who inhabited it. It is a dream that they are now in the process of realising, with the consent of the PLO's chairman and with the blessings of contemporary Arab leaders.

This 'peace process' will yield an apartheid state, consecrated by international agreements and institutionalised with the support of Arab governments no less than Western powers. In a land over which Israel continues to exercise *de facto* sovereign rights, there are to be two categories of inhabitants — citizens who are Jewish settlers, and Arabs who will be governed under the autonomy arrangement. The two shall reside in separated municipalities, will be judged in different courts, their children will attend different schools and their lives will be shaped by differing economic forces. In effect, Arabs and Jews in the Occupied Territories will constitute two distinct groups — the existence of the latter will be privileged, the former precarious, one enjoying the rights of citizenship and the other existing in a grey area between occupation and autonomy, one deeply and hopelessly dependent on the other both politically and economically.

Israel's objectives, which the US and Europe have been supporting so generously, are uncompromisingly exclusionary, sectarian, and based on fundamentalist religious presumptions. And Bill Clinton is merely the latest in the line of recent American presidents who have mouthed support for pluralism, multi-culturalism, and religious tolerance, who have proclaimed human rights, democracy, and racial/religious equality as their mission, who have declared war on sectarian zealotry and fundamentalism only to proceed to underwrite Israel's fundamentalist and exclusionary agenda to further colonise and dispossess Palestinians and other Arabs.

A friend who had undergone long years of torture and imprisonment in occupied Palestine asked: "Are you pessimistic about the Palestinian future?" Yes, I said, in the near future I see little but distortions of leadership and institutions, and for the people continued suffering and resistance. In the long run, the logic of Palestinian resistance, Arab aspirations, and Jewish complexities are such that the racist and unjust arrangements produced by Israeli machination, American support, and Arab complicity shall not last. Meanwhile, the human costs will mount, hopefully not beyond bearing.

Israel's appeal to statutory limitation to justify not prosecuting its war criminals does not hold water, argue the writers below

Crimes unlimited

By Christopher George

The government of Israel should mount an immediate and thorough investigation into recent reports that its army executed hundreds of Egyptian prisoners of war in 1956 and 1967. If Israel finds that crimes were committed, those suspected of responsibility and commanders who knew about the incidents, and did nothing, should be prosecuted. Any political reluctance or domestic procedural barriers, which were cited by Israel's attorney-general last month in his ruling that there is no legal basis or justification for pursuing the case, should be swept aside by the imperatives of morality and international law.

According to an Israeli government-commissioned report and recent journalists' interviews with eyewitnesses and admitted participants, Israeli troops executed hundreds of Egyptian prisoners during Israel's international wars of 1956 and 1967. In chilling detail, a seemingly remorseless retired brigadier general, Aryeh Biro, explained to journalists that during the 1956 War in the Sinai desert he was inconvenienced by the 49 Egyptians he had taken prisoner. So he ordered them to lie face down on the ground and killed them.

Another Israeli soldier recounted how, in the 1967 War, he watched as five prisoners were marched, one by one, to the outskirts of his camp in the Sinai, ordered to dig their own graves, and shot dead.

These reports, which are generally assumed to be accurate and could open the door to further disclosures, have set off bitter and partisan debates within Israel. Referring to the revelations as "national suicide," some of Israel's leaders would prefer to close the subject. Many have denounced the decision to lift military censorship of these accounts, which have tarnished Israelis' image of their army as maintaining high moral standards. Accusations of complicity have touched the country's current political leaders, some of whom were in key military positions at the time. Biro's warning that he would not go down alone could portend an election year filled with mud-slinging over allegations of war-time atrocities.

Obscured by the fury of debate are the basic principles of accountability and justice. The execution of prisoners is a war crime, which, along with crimes against humanity and genocide, has special status under international law. Not only is the responsible state required to investigate and prosecute these offences, but the international community is also called upon to ensure that justice is done. If Israel does not reverse its initial decision to ignore these revelations, it can expect to come under strong international pressure.

There are those in Israel and around the world who question the value of pursuing crimes that took place nearly 40 years ago, given the horrendous atrocities that are happening all over the globe today. We need to expose and punish both. Indeed, failure to address the crimes of the past will only encourage further atrocities today. If Israel had investigated the killing of Egyptian POWs in 1956 and punished those found responsible, the recurrence of similar war crimes in the 1967 conflict might have been averted. But when commanders or governments engage in cover-ups, look the other way, or let off war criminals with a slap on the wrist, the message to militaries worldwide is clear: you can get away with murder.

There are also concerns that these revelations could jeopardise the peace process. They could, but only if Israel refuses to act. One of the most important tests of a government's moral standing and dedication to the rule of law is how it responds to allegations that serious offences, including war crimes, have been committed by its troops. A rigorous, transparent and independent investigation — ideally with the involvement of neutral international observers — could strengthen the mutual trust that is essential to building long-term peace by demonstrating Israel's commitment to human rights standards.

The fact that Israeli law has long exempted Nazi war crimes from its domestic 20-year statute of limitations makes it all the more disturbing to watch the attorney-general roll out procedural technicalities to block investigation and prosecution of alleged Israeli war crimes. These allegations are far too serious for the attorney-general to dismiss in this fashion. At minimum, the issue should go to Israeli courts, which should take into account the international precedents for exempting war crimes from domestic statutes of limitation. Surely Israel, which continues relentlessly to pursue and prosecute war criminals from an even more distant conflict, will recognise the need for a single standard here.

The writer is executive director of Human Rights Watch/Middle East.

Sauce for the goose

By Kirk O'Field

The attorney-general of Israel, Michael Ben-Yair, has announced that no charges will be brought against Arieh Biro, the Israeli brigadier general who publicly admitted summarily executing 49 Egyptian prisoners in the 1956 Sinai war. Nor will there be an investigation of the execution of 300 more Egyptian prisoners in the 1967 Six Day war. Both were wars that Israel initiated. The top enforcer of Israeli justice says that the 20-year statute of limitations has lapsed.

General Biro is quoted by an Israeli newspaper, "I didn't have the soldiers to guard them, so I decided to liquidate them." Haven't we heard this before? During the Battle of the Bulge, Joachim Peiper, the commander of an SS Panzer Brigade, decided that prisoners impeded his advance. The result was a string of atrocities that included the Malmedy Massacre. At the Dachau War Crimes Trial, Peiper was sentenced to death and spent 11 years in prison before his eventual parole. General Biro has done the same thing, and now Attorney-General Ben-Yair merely tells the Israeli army to take care "that such things never happen again". Lieutenant Calley eventually got off lightly for the My Lai massacre, but at least he was court marshalled, convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The statute of limitations excuse evokes a sense of *déjà vu*. On 11 May, 1960, Mossad illegally kidnapped Adolf Eichmann from Buenos Aires — kidnapped, not extradited. This was understandable because many South American governments had been obstructing justice by refusing extradition. Fifteen years had passed since the crimes and Eichmann's attorney argued that Argentina's domestic statute of limitations had lapsed. It didn't wash; the architect of the Holocaust was hanged to general and deserved applause. Eichmann was a monster, so probably no one outside Argentina worried about how he was brought to justice.

When Germany's statute of limitations was about to expire, the Knesset pitched a fit. In October 1994, the Israeli parliament proclaimed categorically that statutes of limitation do not apply to war crimes. This principle had been codified in Israel under the Nazi and Nazi Collaborators Law and the Genocide Prevention and Punishment Laws of 1950. Formal diplomatic appeals were made through all Israeli embassies that Nazis must not be allowed to escape justice on this technicality. Jewish organisations throughout the world orchestrated a highly successful publicity campaign to extend the statute. The International Conference of Jurists held in 1964 that "in international law, there is no principle establishing periods of limitation in general, and a period of limitation for the prosecution of war crimes and Nazi crimes in particular". Under intense pressure Germany extended the deadline.

Another product of the campaign was the European Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitation to Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes. In December, 1968, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 2391 with 58 votes, including Israel's. The resolution was paired to a UN Treaty on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitation to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity.

As one of its first acts in 1946, the General Assembly of the UN had affirmed the principles of international law expressed in the Charter of the Nuremberg Tribunal. At the urging of the Assembly, the International Law Commission formulated these principles, including the supremacy of international over national law. In other precedents, the current German Supreme Court (and that of the Weimar Republic), as well as the Supreme Courts of France and Belgium, held that statutes of limitation are only a matter of procedural law, not a fundamental right of the accused.

Israel's legal principle was later put into practice. Over four decades had passed when John Demjanjuk was deported to Israel, tried, convicted and sentenced to death. Witness misidentifications and documents forged by the Soviets were instrumental evidence. Finally, even the Israeli Supreme Court had to admit they might have the wrong man and released him.

Curiously, Israel never got around to signing the 1968 UN treaty. There is one treaty that the Israelis did sign and ratify, however. It was in force since 1951, and therefore covers both POW executions. The 1949 Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War forbids "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture" of POWs. The 1968 UN resolution and treaty, specifically included serious crimes under this 1949 Geneva Convention, as having no statute of limitations whether "committed in time of war or in time of peace".

It is a tragic blow to the cause of justice that some of its loudest and longest champions have officially perpetrated a double standard. It is hypocritical to allow a confessed war criminal to enjoy a cushy pension. Isn't justice more important than ethnicity? It is distressing that a brigadier general would freely admit without contrition to war crimes in a newspaper interview, and make the correct assumption that he could do so with impunity. It is an insult to the memory of heroes such as Simon Wiesenthal that no member of the Israeli army came forward before now. Isn't it time to abandon the dogma that victims can do no wrong? As Senator Goldwater said: "Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue".

The writer is a self-syndicated columnist resident in Washington DC. His syndicated column is entitled: Cassandra's Corner.

The great and good

Giselle; Cairo Opera Ballet; Cairo Opera Orchestra; Ivan Filev, conductor; Abdel-Moneim Kamel, director; Main Hall, Cairo Opera House; 6 October

By the lake of no return, **David Blake** gives thanks

Strange thing about royals — they may well come and go, but good or bad they are always there. This ballet has been around for a long time. It is about royals. They don't do much for anyone but themselves in life but they make enduring copy in ballet and opera.

Like Camels and Marlboros they are mostly lethal but no one seems able to do without them. Headless or live, they always wear a Camel Mad Cowboy smile of welcome for which, mostly, we pay. Bitter comedy.

And so is Giselle. She is back, no royal herself but close enough to get scorched. Her adored Albert is the royal in question. He is the very model of a real Bavarian duke. And the ballet is almost as much about him as Giselle. It is a sad tale: she dies at the end of Act I. There is, though, no real need to grieve about her future. Giselle has proved herself quite, quite unexpungeable.

In this version she is in Ludwig of Bavaria country, by the Lake of No Return. A love-crazed huntsman, Heinz, splits on the duke to Giselle, who really doesn't have a hope in the royal marriage stakes, something even she realises given the presence of the duke's fiancée at the boar hunt in Act I.

After some difficult choreography, essential for any mad scene, she keels over and dies of involuntary spastic heartbreak. And it is moving. It is more white wine than treacle. The old jangle of Adam's music is lovely.

It was first performed in Paris in 1841. Despite the early Disney furnishings, it withstands the corrosions of time more bravely than any other ballet. The reason? It is simple: Giselle provides choreography of horrible difficulty. The old thing always comes up shining because it provides a celestial setting for the stars. It was the original, white ballet, and is as firm as a rock on its mountain peak. It takes some scaling.

The first act was splendidly confident. Settings, costumes and colour shading were first class. Huntsman Heinz danced in grand style. Likewise the corps de ballet and the snobby royals, relatives of Albert the Good.

The stars shone. Erminia Kamel knows her way around Giselle. Except perhaps for an inch or so she has everything. She's never the abstract idea of the ballerina. She is absorbed into the role. Easy to love and believable, she turns what might be molasses into honey and lemon. She has a perfect back and easy flowing arms. But most important, she is absolutely into the music.

Sergei Gorbachov is no less a star. His manner is perfect. He can afford to stand back because, wherever he is, he dominates the stage. His moves are exciting because he has so much to move with. When he launches himself into the air, there is always a genuine balletic frisson.

As Act II opened expectations were high. This is, after all, the act that changed ballet. It added a new dimension — flight. It gave to the athletic movements of the body a soul and to ballet a quality — the bittersweet taste of things that pass represented mostly by the young, the beautiful and physically perfect — which became one of its most powerful tools in moving audiences, .

Giselle, Act II, is "elevation" ballet. There is hardly a dance phrase in its long, symphonic composition that does not require elevation — to float, fly or spring with no effort visible.

Act II by the lake where nothing that goes in ever comes out: a pleasant spot, just the place for high jumps. And with the entrance of Myrtha the Ghost Queen the high jumps begin. Her choreography is infamously difficult.

Giselle has double crossed Myrtha by explaining to her duke that if she keeps him dancing till dawn the ghosts will sink harmlessly to the grave and he will dance free. Then comes the duke's turn to jump. Gorbachov lived up to all expectations. He began his celebrated leaps majestically.

Exit Erminia Giselle, blonde. Seconds later, enter a new Giselle, brunette. How come? Gorbachov kept his cool as always but the queen, a little shaken, danced on to apparently extemporised choreography, condemning both blondes and brunettes to eternal perdition.

When in difficulty, send for Gorbachov. He danced and leapt, supporting brunette Giselle in exceptional lifts. But it was no tango, even for the amazed audience. Minutes before the end, the original blonde Giselle danced on stage. The duke gathered her in his arms in a stylish silent cinema embrace, carried her across stage and deposited her in her grave. After a Byronic exit for the duke — finis.

The unfortunate Erminia Kamel had sprained her ankle at the beginning of Act II and danced on until forced to retire.

The company did gallantly in their on-scene stitch up of the wounded act. For good measure the final tableau was extremely moving — something had gone wrong but they kept going. The blonde Giselle, thanks to her guts, went to her grave in the correct manner. Staying power and courage.

Favourites II: Beethoven, Egmont Overture; Ravel, Scheherazade for soprano and orchestra, Caroline Dumas, soloist; Dvorak, Symphony E minor, op 95 (From the New World); Cairo Symphony Orchestra; Miguel Graca Moura, conductor; Main Hall, Cairo Opera House; 7 October

The *Egmont* is often a bore. It is grand for sure, though usually it avoids the pompous and the self-satisfied. Neither appeared in Graca Moura's version. He soon showed himself to be a majestic maestro — neither flip or hip. This *Egmont* was authentic in its own way. Never chic or dragged about. Beethoven's *Egmont* will be always with us, through storm and flood. And with a tone such as this who can complain?

The Graca Moura tone had come to stay the evening. We do not get tone like this so often. The ear positively gorged on its depth and rich brown sugar colour. All the instrumental groups were fine and given their chance individually. The strings, after a thin start, got into the mood, the brass too, and the winds had a celebration night. Everything was in order. It was joy all the way, with depths.

In Ravel's *Scheherazade* the orchestra was joined by Caroline Dumas. She is a model of style for singers in her own realm. Like Graca Moura she likes speed. She never falters or drags the music into long, mannered vocal stretch-outs, which bore even when angels with million dollar voices mouth them. She sings — straight in time, and when a portamento is called for, she's there to deliver it. One can't really ask for more though maybe, in this Ravel, a little more volupté was needed. High flying tones were floated with ease and beautiful colour. Dumas kept herself completely in view vocally, in spite of Graca Moura's exuberance.

This was never the once deadly "lovely civilised French music". The fortissimos shone and the pianissimos breathed like cool breezes over the summer orchestra. Add to this Dumas's proper determination to sing Ravel almost at the speed of speech and we had a sumptuous impetuousity. The *Asie* floated a mystery, the *Enchanted Flute* a ravishing duet between instrument and voice and *L'indifferent*, which finished the group, was a splendid shrug, the Giaconda smile. Dumas and Graca Moura had woven a spell.

This seems to be Dvorak's year: festival, concert, opera house — he's everywhere. We can't, it seems, get enough of him.

Graca Moura knows just how much there is to Dvorak. In this symphony we ripped off at the beginning, sailing away to someplace new. A regatta. All the flags flew. The Cairo Symphony was in a grand, receptive mood.

It's always nice not to know how great music is made. It comes from wherever the object is hit and the right sparks fly. Everything fizzes. This much loved symphony whizzed off into space, where there is nothing but light and colour and enjoyment. There was not a smirk in sight and no time for half measures as Graca Moura illuminated the great, generous soul of Dvorak.



Amira Fouad, pianist, is artistic director of the Festival of the Nile, Egypt's first festival devoted to chamber music. The festival comprises a series of concerts in both Cairo and Alexandria encompassing performances by foreign and Egyptian musicians. For full details see Listings

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Egypt Through the Lenses of Milan Zemina
Ewart Gallery, American University in Cairo, Al-Sheikh Rihan St, Tahrir Sq. Tel 357 3874. Until 12 Oct.
Photos from the archeological sites excavated by the Czech Archeological Mission, including the Pyramid of Abu Seir.

Assem Sharaf
Espace, 1 Al-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 12 Oct.

Egypt Mother of All Countries
Cairo-Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef Al-Guindi St, Bab Al-Louk. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. Until 21 Oct.
19th century postcards of Egypt.

Working with Natural Materials
Faculty of Applied Arts, Helwan University. Tel 713 312/718 856. Until 23 Oct.
Works by German sculptor Marlies Poss.

Alexandria calls Venice
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 Al-Sheikh Al-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. Daily exc Sun, 10am-1pm & 5pm-7pm. Until 23 Oct.
Engravings, paintings and photographs from the collection of architect Mohamed Awad.

The Musque of Rome (Photography)
Diplomatic Centre, 11 Shagaret Al-Dor St, Zamalek. Tel 341 5419. Daily exc Fri, 10am-3pm & 4pm-8pm. 15-24 Oct.

Joaquina Casas (Paintings)
Spanish Cultural Centre, 20 Boulos Hanna St, Dokki. Tel 360 1746/337 1962. Daily exc Sun, 10am-8pm. Until 27 Oct.

Sayed Abdel-Rassoul and Group Exhibition
Salama Gallery, 36 Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242/344 8109. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2.30pm & 5pm-10pm. 16-30 Oct.
40 years after his death, Salama exhibits Abdel-Rassoul's paintings inspired by folk and natural scene alongside Ali Dessouki, Sawsan Amer and Sherif Reda.

Video Visions Cairo
Al-Hanager Arts Centre, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-10pm, Until 30 Oct.
Installations and video works by a group of artists.

Passage to Eternity
Rare Books and Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo, corner of Al-Sheikh Rihan and Mansour Sts. Tel 357 3874. Until 31 Oct.
Exhibition focussing on Egyptian funerary customs and beliefs.

Safeya Mo'in
Ewart Gallery, American University in Cairo, Al-Sheikh Rihan St, Tahrir Sq. Tel 357 5422/3/4. Daily exc Fri 8am-8pm. 15-31 Oct.
Paintings of the Egyptian landscape.

Youth Salon
Arts Centre, 1 Al-Maahad Al-Swissri St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 31 Oct.
Over 250 works in a variety of media by 150 artists under 35 years of age.

Future Fossils
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 778 623. Daily exc Fri, 11am-8pm. Until 2 Nov.
Objects of an eclectic nature combined by Mohamed Abla.

Gamal El-Sagini (Paintings and Sculptures)
Extra, 3 Al-Nessim St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 4 Nov.

Hungarian Roots of Photography
Sony Gallery, American University in Cairo, Al-Sheikh Rihan St, Tahrir Sq. Tel 357 5422/3/4. Daily exc Fri 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 9 Nov.
From the collection of the Hungarian National Museum of Photography.

Egyptian Museum
Tahrir Sq, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4.30pm, Fri 9am-11.30am, 1.30pm-4.30pm.

Coptic Museum
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm, Fri 9am-11am, 1pm-4pm.

Islamic Museum
Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab Al-Khalq. Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm, Fri 9am-11.30am, 1.30pm-4pm.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art
Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.

Mohamed Nagi Museum
Château Pyramids, 9 Mahmoud Al-Guindi St, Giza.

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum
Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.

FILMS

Cinemas change their programmes on Monday. Information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas.

Fall Guy
Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr Al-Aini St, Garden City. Tel 355 3962/3/4. 12 Oct, 6pm. Arabic subtitles.
Directed by Fukasako Kinji (1982). In this 108-minute film, a bit player adores a famous actor who agrees to play a dangerous scene for him.

La Dolce Vita
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 Al-Sheikh Al-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8723. 15 Oct, 7pm.
Fellini's 1959 masterpiece starring Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg. Black and white, 174 min.

German Social Films
Goethe Institute, 5 Abdel-Salam Aref St, Downtown. Tel 575 9877/5779479. English subtitles.
The Terrible Threesome
Directed by Hermine Huntgeburth (1991). *17 Oct, 6.30pm.*
The Parwitz' Stare
Directed by Didi Danquart (1991). *18 Oct, 6.30pm.*

French Films
French Cultural Centre, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St, Ismailia Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824/25. Arabic subtitles.
Le Sang d'un Poète (A Poet's Blood)
Directed by Jean Cocteau (1930) and starring Enrique Rivero, Ferel Bangs and Pauline Carton. In an artist's studio, an unfinished statue comes to life. Black and white, 49 min. *15 Oct, 7pm.*
Une Affaire de Femmes (An Affair for Women)
Directed by Claude Chabrol (1988) and starring Isabelle Huppert, the film focusses on a woman abortionist whose job eventually leads her to the guillotine. *16 & 17 Oct, 7pm.*
Monsieur Klein
Directed by Joseph Losey (1976) and starring Alain Delon and Jeanne Moreau. Robert Klein is an opportunistic art dealer who uses the Jews' difficult circumstances under the German occupation to buy paintings. *18 Oct, 7pm.*

The Mask
Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Just Cause
Rivoli II, 26th July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 8pm & 10pm.

Lethal Weapon III
Odeon, 4 Dr Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.
With Mel Gibson and Danny Glover.

The Super & Sareq Al-Farah (Kill Joy)
Normandy (outdoor), 31 Al-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 7pm.



Future Fossils, Mohamed Abla

Outbreak
Cairo Sheraton, Galaa St. Tel 360 6081/ 348 8600/700. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight. Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche Al-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & midnight.
With Dustin Hoffman, Rene Russo and Donald Sutherland.

Disclosure
Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm.
With Michael Douglas and Demi Moore.

Power Rangers
Al-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Teenagers overcome the wicked witch.

Interview With The Vampire
Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 4726. Daily 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Normandy, 31 Al-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
With Tom Cruise.

Indecent Proposal
Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
Starring Demi Moore and Robert Redford.

Stargate
Karim I, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Emra'a Hazzat 'Arsh Misr (The Woman Who Shook Egypt's Throne)
Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm. Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
Nadia El-Guindi with Farouk El-Fishawi and Mahmoud Hemeida.

Tuyur Al-Thalam (Birds of the Dark)
Diana Palace, 17 Al-Alfi St, Emadeddin. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche Al-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
With Adel Imam, Youssra and Gamil Rateb and directed by Sherif Arafa.

'Atabet Al-Settat (The Women's Threshold)
Rivoli I, 26th July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 8pm & 10pm. Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm. Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Starring Nabila Ebeid.

Ehna Awlad Elnaharda (We Are Today's Children)
Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 824. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Athar El-Hakim, Aida Riad and Medhat Saleh.

MUSIC

Literary Cabaret
Hall A, Al-Hanager Arts Centre, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. 12 Oct, 8.30pm.
Two cities embrace, two poets converse: Cavafy and Apollinaire. With Anne See, Emile Roche, Abdallah Badis and Mustafa El-Tayar; directed by Patrice Bornand.

Polish Folklore
Hall A, Al-Hanager Arts Centre, as above. 13 Oct, 8pm.

Music for Two Pianos & The Telephone
Small Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 342 0598/341 2926. 12 & 13 Oct, 8pm.
David Hales and Greig Martin perform works by Britten, Martin, Shostakovich and Walton. Ramez Labad with Nabila Erian (Thur) and Nevine Allouba (Fri) in Menotti's The Telephone.

Cairo Symphony Orchestra
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 14 Oct, 8pm.
Claudio Scimone conducts extracts of Verdi's Aida and Beethoven's Eroica.

Festival of the Nile
12 Oct, 8pm: British International School; 13 & 15 Oct, 8pm: Salon Royal, Marriott Hotel; 16 Oct, 8pm: Charity Concert; 17 Oct, 8pm: CAC, Rd 213, Maadi.
The first chamber music festival ever to be held in Egypt includes performances by Amira Fouad, Canadian violonist Kai Gleustein and Lebanese flautist Wissam Boustani.

THEATRE

The Secretary Bird
Nile Hilton, Corniche Al-Nil. Tel 578 0444. 12-14 Oct, 8pm. (Tickets LE175)
Gerald Harper and Elizabeth Counsell star inWilliam Douglas Home's comedy hit

Destoor Ya Siadna (With Your Permission, Masters)
Al-Fann, Ramses St. Tel 578 2444. Daily 9.30pm exc Mon.
Play by Mahmoud El-Toukhi, directed by Galal El-Sharkawy and starring Ahmed Bedeir and Nermine El-Fiqi.

Hazz Nawa'em (Nawa'em's Luck)
Al-Houssaper, 16 Al-Ter'a Al-Boulaqeya St. Tel 769 233. Daily 10pm, exc Tues.
Directed by Roziq El-Bahnassawoui, starring Dalal Abdel-Aziz, Mahmoud El-Guindi and So'ad Nasr.

Al-Za'im (The Leader)
Al-Haram, Pyramids Road, Giza. Tel 386 3952. Daily exc Tues, 10pm. Mon & Fri 8pm.
Starring Adel Imam in a play scripted by Farouk Sabri.

Al-Gamila wal Wehshin (The Beautiful and the Ugly)
Al-Zamalek, 13 Shagaret Al-Dor, Zamalek. Tel 341 0660. Daily 10.30pm, exc Fri 8.30pm.
Starring Laila Oloui as the *gamila* and everyone else as the *wehshin*.

Mama America
Qasr Al-Nil, Qasr Al-Nil St, Tahrir. Tel 575 0761. Daily exc Tues, 10pm. Mon 8pm.
Mohamed Sobhi, director and lead actor, in a socio-political allegory written by Mahdi Youssef.

Louly
Balloon, Corniche Al-Nil, Agouza. Tel 347 1718. Daily exc Tues, 9pm.
Musical performance starring Fayza Kamal and Mohamed El-Helw.

Ya Nas Efhamon (Try to Understand, People)
Floating Theatre, Fatma Rushdi St. Tel 363 8783. Daily 9.30pm.
Starring Emad Rashad, Dina Abdallah and Hassan Kami.

Ra's Al-Diouk (Cockerel Dances)
Miami, Talaat Harb St. Tel 767 086. Daily 10pm, exc Tues.
Starring Nagah El-Mougi with Mohamed Abul-Hassan and Aida Riad.

Bahloul fi Istambul (Bahloul in Istambul)
Hilton Ramsis, Corniche Al-Nil. Tel 574 7435. Daily 10pm, Sun 8pm.
Samir Ghanem stars with Elham Shahine.

La...Balash Keda (None of That)
Al-Rihani, Emadeddin. Tel 591 3697. Daily exc Wed 10pm. Tues 8.30pm.
Starring Poussi and Mamdouh Abdel-Alim.

Hazzemni Ya...
Al-Gezira, Abdel-Aziz Al-Seoud, Manial. Tel 364 4160. Daily 10pm, Fri 8pm.
Starring Fifi Abdou, Medhat Saleh and Sherif Mounir.

National Circus
Next to Balloon Theatre, Al-Nil St, Corniche Al-Nil, Al-Agouza. Tel 347 0612. Daily, exc Wed, 9pm.

LECTURES

Egyptian Foreign Policy in a Challenging World
Oriental Hall, American University in Cairo, Al-Sheikh Rihan St, Tahrir Sq. Tel 357 5436. 18 Oct, 5pm.
Lecture by Dr Osssama El-Baz.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.
Please telephone or send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo. Tel 5786064. Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

Art

An Andalusi presence

In her latest exhibition, Joaquina Casas modulates colour and reconciles spatial tensions. **Marie-Therese Abdel-Messih** explores her paintings

Since her arrival in Cairo from Gerona in 1960, Joaquina Casas (b. 1931) has been trying to define her position within the Egyptian landscape. Her paintings and drawings are a series of attempts that move from comprehensive views to details and back again. Constant through various changes in style is Casas's desire to synthesise her European training with her Egyptian visual perception.

Casas's interpretation of the Egyptian landscape — in Luxor, Aswan, Sinai and so on — is focused on the interplay between enviromental features and domestic activities. In formulating and reformulating the aesthetic of such an interplay, Casas has defined her location as artist — that of an *Andalusi* presence.

Andalusi does not merely denote a preconquista historical past. Rather, it means *la convivencia* (conviviality) and signifies peaceful coexistence with the Other. It is the spirit of positive cultural interaction between East and West. Casas, who has lived the Egyptian and Spanish experiences simultaneously, delicately balances in her art the East/West forces with their different aesthetics of space. These, as evinced by the way she traces relationships between (and links) independent units in the landscape, are not incompatible.

Her fundamental pictorial aim is to represent a three-dimensional experience of reality in the two-dimensional terms dictated by the flat Egyptian landscape. She avoids sculptural forms and shading. Instead, she creates an intersection of planes, so that the different well-balanced volumes pass into one another through hatching brush strokes. The unity between the components is achieved by the lack of differentiation in surface texture and by the circular movement of the compositions.

In her latest exhibition, Casas gracefully combines realistic and abstract styles. In *The Valley of Kings* she achieves a balance between the realistic veiled figures in the foreground and the abstract dunes in the background. The more distant dunes are larger than the houses and figures in the foreground. A balanced pattern of diagonal, vertical and horizontal lines is created by the figures; a lifted arm initiates a circular movement from left to right; the movement recedes backwards; movement and counter-movement creates a third dimension. Space intervals between receding grades are punctuated by neutral whites and by the tension between the vertical strokes and the horizontal. Though there is a contrast between the domestic dark veiled figures in the foreground and the aloof colourful dunes in the background, a relationship of correlation rather than polarisation is established.

A similar relation between realism and abstraction recurs in *Black Camels and White Dunes*, only here there is no contiguous relationship between camels and dunes. The relationship is established simply through repetition and distribution. The form and movement of the camels reproduce those of the vertical dunes and horizontal sky. The camels' movement towards the right is parallel to that of the cloud. Casas's colour scheme, founded on the contrast between the warm pale ochre and cool blue colours of the desert, also works towards harmonising separate spaces. Bluish dunes exchange colour with ochre skies — a network of colour interweaves the scattered shapes of sand which mirror the sky with clouds that have taken on the ochre colour of the sand. Through similar colour modulations Casas resolves the tension between the wild wandering beasts and the aloof static dunes.

Colour modulations thus assist in the creation of perspective.



Form is built up through planes of colour modulated from cool to warm. In *Sinai: Rocks and Water*, the blue strip of water gradually takes the ochre colour as it flows into the sand, thus setting up a magnetic relation with the opposing dunes. The dunes acquire volume by the tension established between advancing fragments of warm colour, on the one hand, and the receding ebb of the blue water on the other. The dunes' tendency towards volume, however, does not mar the two-dimensional effect. This is also the case in *Rocks and Tombs* where the front planes of the dunes remain parallel to the picture plane and are suggestive of decorative arabesque bands or mosaic decorations.

Casas deals sensitively with the subject of women performing their household chores in the open air — she has little interest in interiors. Though the human figure is often central, she traces a harmony between the women and the objects they use and which surround them. In *Oasis: Fruit Season, Baking Day* and *By the Canal Borders* the atmosphere is casual and the women are quite at ease with their work. They are made central by the triangular composition. In *Oasis*, for example, two diagonal lines establish a pyramid which has as its apex a human figure. Spatial relations, however, are not only established by a pyramid which has the human figure as its starting point, but also by the overlapping of shapes. Though in *Canal Border* the human figure is the axis from which the overlapping planes commence their recession in space and around which they rotate back and forth, it is the work activity and not the performer that is emphasised. In *Baking* which also has an anthrocentric pyramidal composition as its starting point, the scattered pots within the triangle work as important elements of parallelism and are hence also central to the composition's strength. Casas thus creates an equilibrium between the "significant" and the "insignificant", the activity and the tool used to enable it.

In these open air household activities the human figure is not idealised — the idea of greatness and singularity is banished. The human here is on a par with any object. Casas's is a universe where humans and objects are integral parts of the cultural forces that have shaped them just as the natural forces around them have provided the Delta Valley from the Nile. Though hers is a landscape where tension enables form and where each thing has a discrete and valid existence, her universe is not ridden with dichotomies but modulated by colour.

Nor is there a dichotomy of mimetic versus non-mimetic representation in her works. There is, rather, a continuity between the realistic and the abstract. This unbroken range of visual interpretation is reflected in her ability to ground her aesthetic statements gently in the non-aesthetic communal life. Casas has been able to apprehend the Egyptian landscape in two different directions. For her, there is more in a rustic community than the "realistic" ethnographic detail of "primitive" life and the desert land is less forbiddingly abstract than it appears.

Casas's works hover in the in-between. She manages to quieten the boisterous and make the mute expressive in its silence. Her landscape is not an arbitrary formulation by an outsider. It bespeaks a *convivencia* between subject and object, a space where the outsider can feel in, a location where the Spanish artist can establish an *Andalusi* presence.

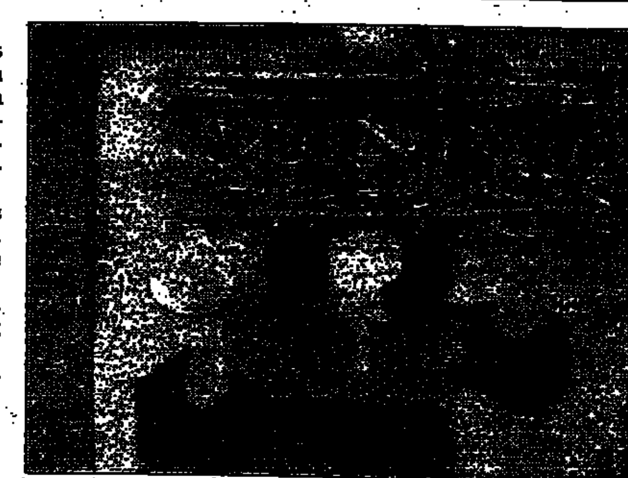
Around the galleries

THE FOYER of Al-Ahram building on Galaa Street hosts an exhibition which focuses on the oases of the Western Desert: clay figurines and photographs depict both the inhabitants and the physical environment.

The 7th Youth Salon occupies the Centre of Arts, Zamalek. This year's Akhenaten Golden Prize was awarded to Ayman El-Simari for a multi media wall installation comprising four panels.

Cairo Atelier exhibits textile wall-hangings by El-Amir Alfons, embellished with straw, cut out metal shapes and pieces of scrap wood.

Reviewed by ***Nagwa El-Ashiri***



El-Amir Alfons

Room with a view

Nigel Ryan visits the Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum in Giza, which will open its doors to the public on Sunday. The collection of art it contains is, he discovers, as mercurial as its owner



photos: Sherif Sonbol

The collection of art belonging to the late Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil has at last found its way home. Bequeathed to the state in 1960, following the death of Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil's widow, the bequest carried certain conditions, one of which was that the collection be exhibited in the Khalil family home, a three storey Italianate house in Giza. The house has now been transformed, at a reputed cost of LE14 million, into a museum housing what is probably the finest collection of 19th century European art in the Middle East.

It has been a long journey. The route from Zamalek, where for many years the paintings were displayed in a summer villa built by a cousin of King Fouad, took in Paris and the Musée d'Orsay, where the Khalil collection's star turns were exhibited alongside paintings culled from the Gezira collection and from the Diplomats' — the former Mohamed Ali — Club, under the title The Forgotten Ones of Cairo.

The new museum, the imminent opening of which was first announced more than four years ago, progressed slowly. Two years ago the onsight engineer told me that work had been halted for six months owing to a failure to allocate funds to the restoration. Such hiccups can now, largely, be forgotten amid the sea of marble pathways that dissect the gardens of the house. The villa rises, white and shining, in the midst of well-groomed lawns. And inside a house that must, once, have been a very domestic establishment, has been stripped bare, painted the requisite museum dove grey and white, and given shiny replacement parquet floors.

Gone the paraphernalia of haute bourgeoisie comfort. It is the paintings one comes to see these days, not M et Mme Khalil. The paintings themselves, though, speak of a time long gone, of a pre-inflationary era when decent paintings could be purchased for multiples of less than a million. Art with a name attached was within the reach of the upper middle-classes. It was not the prerogative of the fabulously rich or the institutional buyer.

Much of the collection — bought, one is invariably told, with the help of French experts — was amassed in the thirties and early forties. It was bought in Paris at knock down prices largely, one must conclude, from those desperate to escape a Europe in turmoil. The thirties were a murky period: European Jews, desperate to escape Nazi Germany, sold anything and everything. Paris art dealers, cashing in on the bonanza, would fake not only a provenance but also a painting. Egypt too had its share of counterfeiters, a small atelier run by an elderly Russian — once the representative of the Court of St Petersburg — specialised throughout the thirties and forties in creditable copies of late impressionist paintings. It was an ideal time for passing, for disguise. It was in nobody's interest to call anyone's bluff. And it was in such an atmosphere that Khalil collected. The result of this passion to amass is an odd thing. The Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil collection is as chameleon as its owner.

Khalil was a politician of the ancien regime: throughout the thirties and forties he was a leading member of the Wafd. In 1937 he was minister of agriculture in the Nahhas Pasha administration. From 1938 until 1942, when he was replaced by Mahmoud Hamza, Khalil served as president of the Senate. In a report dated 1940, compiled by Miles Lampson for the British Foreign Secretary Antony Eden, he is described as pro-French, possibly an Italian sympathiser, a man of "average intelligence who thinks himself prime minister". The British thought him a tool of French propaganda. On his death the French ambassador to Egypt, Maurice Couve de Murville (who, incidentally, succeeded Georges Pompidou as prime minister in 1968) opined that France had "lost one of her staunchest Egyptian friends".

Khalil's political affiliations appear to have been as mercurial as his aesthetic predilections. There is little that unifies his collection. Certainly, there is a preponderance of French art, but one would be hard pressed to detect any consistency in the collection save, perhaps, the arbitrary desire to own. Delacroix, late Monet (the garden at Giverny), a lot of fluffy Pissaro's, intense Courbet portraits, extraordinary Rodin's alongside meretricious animal bronzes by Barye — Khalil bought the lot.

The scope of this collection appears to have been determined by what was available. Khalil, one suspects, did not chase with a passion — rather he purchased, or declined to purchase, what appeared before him: one day Fromentin, a panoramic view of the Nile with half naked Nubian girls lolling in the foreground — eroticism posed as landscape, the next Pissaro, a game of cricket in Bedford Park — imperial power as sunny, sporting little England.

There are vast differences in the quality of the works collected. The hanging of the new museum stresses the supposed highlights. Both Gauguin — a large painting of two nudes from 1889, an allegory, the accompanying literature stresses, of life and death — and a Van Gogh still life, have rooms to themselves. The interiors are black, the paintings set in a recess in the wall, dramatically lit for an audience that is supposed to gather on the rows of chairs set before each canvas. It is the kind of display package that is usually reserved for international icons, for the Mona Lisa or, at the very least, a Leonardo cartoon. It is odd to see a Gauguin and Van Gogh displayed in such a way. The Ministry of Culture has estimated that the former is worth a cool $89 million — making it far and away the most valuable piece of post-impressionist art ever not to come up at auction. The chairs are there, perhaps, for those who might swoon at the sight of so much money in such a discreet frame. The Van Gogh, which when I visited was hanging a little askew, is served, if anything, less well by its setting. It appears to have undergone extensive restoration with the result that the surface is now so shiny that, given the spotlighting, it is virtually impossible to see the painting through the glare.

A Monet of the bridge over the celebrated lily pond at Giverny dominates the upper storey. Two years ago Monet's serial paintings were the subject of a major exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London. The only institution that failed to respond to a loan request was the Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum. The Monet they were so keen to protect is a large painting, very large in comparison to the bulk of the collection. It dates from the final decade of Monet's life, and despite its size and instant recognition value, is as fussy as only an old man could make it. It is far less impressive than a much earlier, smaller (and unfinished?) painting from the early 1870s, the period when Renoir and Monet were working together at Argenteuil, formulating the pictorial vocabulary of impressionism. Here, Monet sketches the river at the Seine village that became such a popular day trip destination for Parisians, with the clarity and directness that was to revolutionise 19th century art.

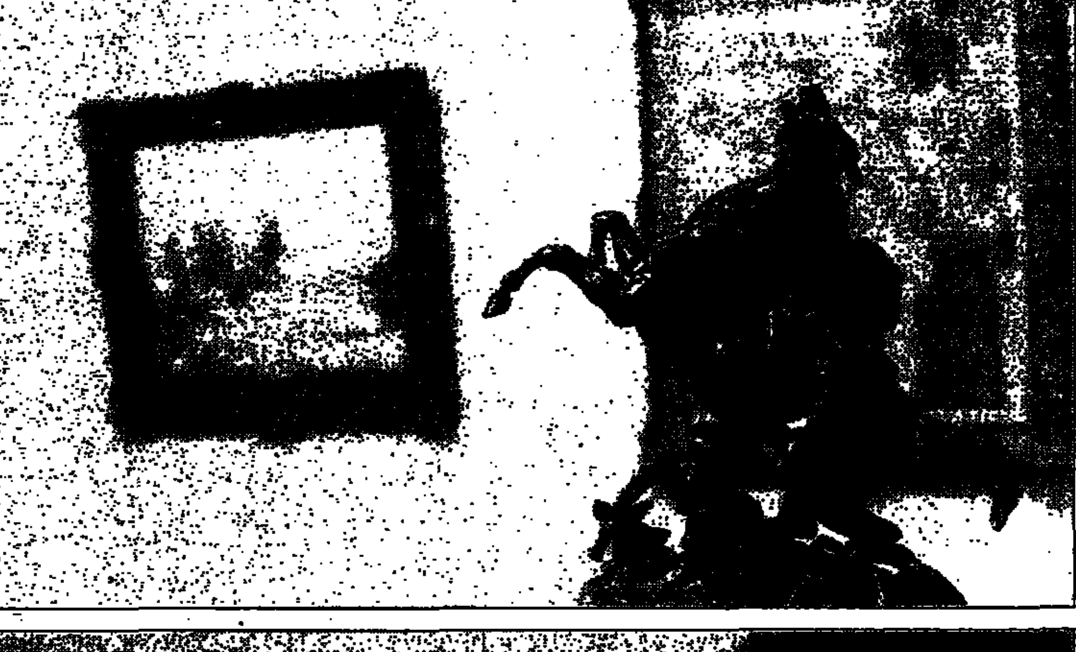
Among the collection's impressionist holdings some of the most remarkable items are to be found in three display cases on the second floor. Small *plein air* studies, often completed on the lids of cigar boxes, crowd the shelves. Unfortunately, though a photocopied list is available the pieces themselves are mostly unnumbered and so it becomes impossible to cross reference object with artist. Perhaps the finest Pissaro, however, is contained within the display cases, a wonderful figure study of two peasants. There are also two Fantin Latour's — perfect examples of what a miniature can do.

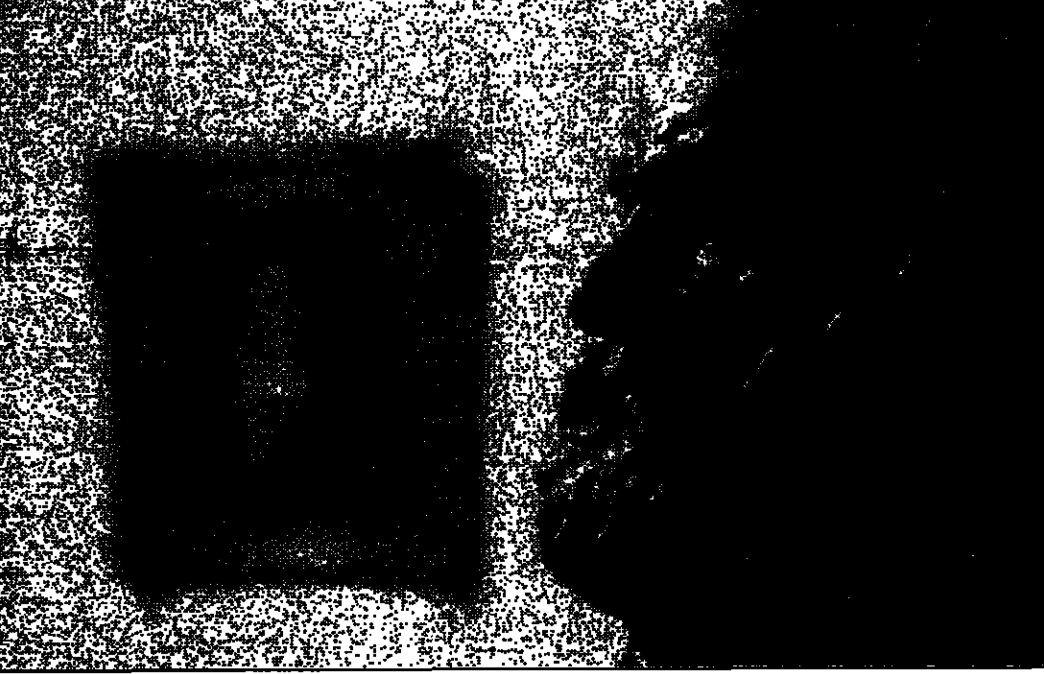
A crude rule of thumb: the smaller the better. There are marvelous small paintings, including a wonderful Daumier illustration of Don Quixote, with Sancho Panza following the Don as he disappears over the horizon. The collection includes a second Daumier, listed as A Woman Sleeping Beneath A Tree, which looks suspiciously like another Don Quixote, wine sodden and sagging. I remember asking the curator of the collection when it was in Zamalek why the two Daumiers were not hung together since they were both from the Don Quixote series. He pointed at the reclining figure and said: "Look, she has breasts, it is a woman." Admittedly the Don is in no danger of winning a gold medal in the Olympic hurdles but this hardly seems sufficient reason to change his sex. The Daumiers are among the real highlights of the collection. They have absolutely nothing in common with the sugar icing late Sisleys and Pissaros hung in far more prominent positions.

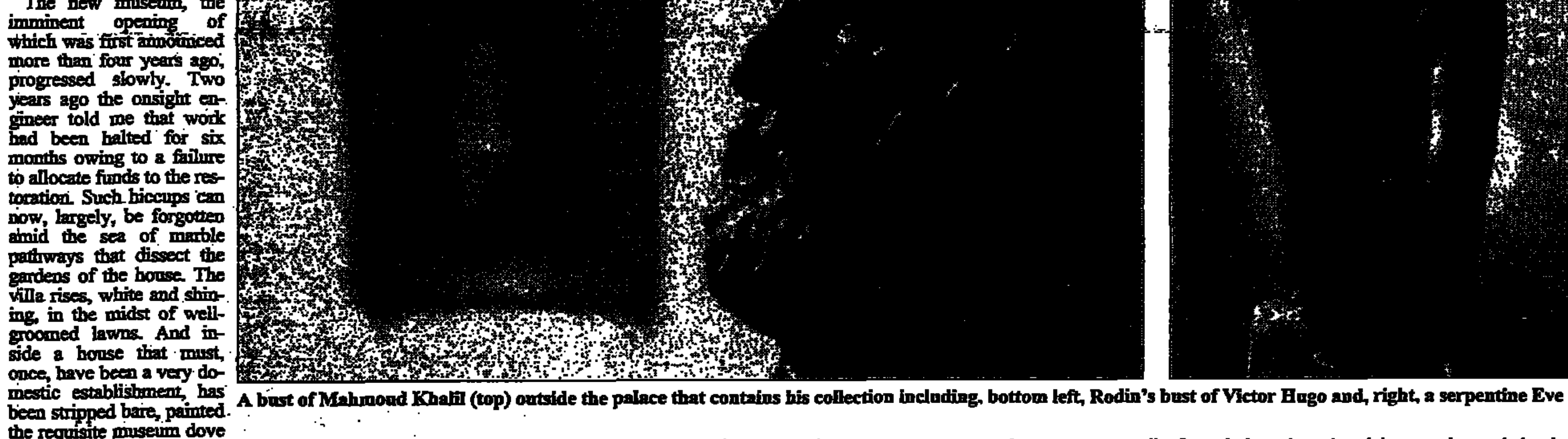
If you are in search of some coherence for this collection, it is easier to establish links between the earlier works. The extreme tonalities of the Daumiers are derived from preparatory sketches such as that for a Delacroix *piéta* hanging in an adjacent room. And the *piéta*, with its lurid highlights and dark background could not be further away from the fuss fuss fussiness of so many of the collection's later paintings.

A second rule of thumb: what is not oil may well be very good. Full blown oils have always commanded the highest prices. If you have a limited budget it is often far more sensible to look at other media: a first rate drawing will be a tiny fraction of the price of a first rate painting. The small room given over to Millet contains an intense and moving sketch of a seamstress. On the upper floor is a huge Degas pastel, far more convincing than the smaller oil included in the collection. There is also an 'official highlight' of the collection on the upper floor — one reproduced as a postcard by the museum, and therefore of great worth — a Moreau watercolour of Salomé carrying the head of John the Baptist.

It is an odd collection. One would expect it to bespeak the taste of its owner, though the kindest description of that taste would be catholic. Everything is higgledy-piggledy, which in the old museum hardly mattered, since paintings were hung next to extravagant fireplaces of polychromatic tiles, against damask covered walls and lavishly inlaid marble floors. The new museum is uncompromising in the manner in which it focuses its attention on the paintings. The decorative details of the building provide little if any distraction. Nor are the oriental objets d'art, which provided relief in the old museum, anywhere to be seen in the new. You cannot speculate on the inhabitants who once used the sunken marble bath, who sat around the massive marble table that dominated a ground floor gallery of the old museum. You cannot really speculate about Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil, except that he tended to buy what the French experts recommended.







A bust of Mahmoud Khalil (top) outside the palace that contains his collection including, bottom left, Rodin's bust of Victor Hugo and, right, a serpentine Eve

Is it fair to hazard a guess? The Cordier busts on the ground floor — *Jeune Femme Fellah au harem* and *Chiek Arabe du Caire* — seem far more at home in this denuded palace than Rodin's *L'appel aux armes*. The Winterhalter portrait of a minor princess, in its oval rococo frame — an extraordinary painting this, the princess rising out of her décolleté like a death mask ascending to heaven — looks authentically in place. The intense Courbet portraits look a trifle lost. Prosper Marilhat's view of Islamic Cairo — a piece of orientalism that disintegrates beneath the weight of its own romantic symbols — is properly housed within the pseudo-Italian walls. Monet's view of the Palace of Westminster looks ludicrously out of place. One of the few paintings to bear an inscription — Aman Jean's Confidences, painted "In honour of Mme Mahmoud Bey" — is sub pre-Raphaelite orientalism, all swoons in turbans.

Archive photographs exist of Madame Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil descending the staircase of the house, the walls completely covered in small canvasses. Perhaps this is the way the paintings should have been displayed — a little bit here, a little bit there, the good paintings dispersed among the less good and — it must be said — the mediocre, but all part and parcel of an upper-middle class home belonging to one of those people characterised by the late Magdi Wahba as believing that Paris was the navel of the world.

Walking out of the museum, along the marble path that cuts across a lawn punctuated by the kind of ornamental streetlights that belong on suburban patios, what strikes most forcibly is just how glossy this new museum is. It has its advantages — certainly, displayed like this the collection provides a salutary reminder of just how frothy, how very insubstantial, late impressionism can be. It shows, too, how disturbing, how very undomesticated, are Rodin's sculptures. It is no mean feat of the Ministry of Culture to provide access to a collection as large and — regardless of the fact that the majority of the paintings are salon art, produced to make money by artists who are, by and large, better known for better paintings — as important as this. Yet it was impossible not to feel a twinge of nostalgia for the old museum, a dusty summer pavilion that housed uncleaned Corots and which swamped the excesses of Sisley in a gloom punctuated by dappled sunlight shining through the mashrabiya. In Zamalek the paintings had been domesticated. Here they are museum pieces. Some were happier at home.

Mahmoud Khalil sits on the lawn before his old home, a larger than life bronze head surveying the visitors who will, hopefully, swarm along the marble path. His expression is benign. Don't be fooled.







Highlights — Fromentin, a view of the Nile; Daumier, an illustration from Don Quixote, and one of two Boudins included in the collection

Plain Talk

There is a general feeling that the October War needs more than just song and dance celebrations and fireworks. This does not mean that we deny the people the right to jollity and fun, but at the same time one cannot help nurturing a desire for something more. Of course there are the films. But apart from *The Road to Eilat*, there is no film worth ascribing to the October War. We are still viewing newly produced films not only about the Second World War, but about the First World War, and the American War of Independence.

Such films, if they are to succeed, need not only an exciting story but adequate financing. I remember that some years ago there was some kind of competition for true war stories with the aim of producing such a film. I do not know what has come out of this, but no film has yet emerged.

Brooding over this, I began to explain to myself the significance of the October War. President Anwar El-Sadat described it as a war to achieve peace. Indeed in the middle of the Egyptian armed forces' success, President Sadat extended a hand of peace.

Since peace was the expressed aim of the war, peace should be the flagpost around which celebrations of the October War should revolve. And peace is the raison d'être of the United Nations which is celebrating 50 years of its existence.

How can we celebrate the October War in peace? The answer to this question came via two sources, the UNESCO publication called *Museum International* and a report produced by an Irish friend of mine entitled *The Third Way: Through The Wandering Rocks*.

The latest UNESCO publication has a subtitle *Museums of War and Peace*. In an article *The Concept of a Peace Museum* Terence Davey, author of a report called *Education For Peace in Ireland*, explains what is meant by this term. Although such museums vary in their concept and content, there is something they have in common, which is the principle of education for peace through the arts.

Peace museums started before the First World War, but it was during the last two decades that the idea spread, and quite a number of such museums have come into being. Whether these museums are initiated by the state or by individuals, their aim is to study the relation between war and peace on the one hand and the arts on the other. Their aim is to realise what UNESCO calls "the culture for peace".

According to Davey there are four kinds of peace museums: peace museums per se, museums devoted to specific events like the Hiroshima Memorial Museum for Peace, museums based on international human laws like the Red Cross and the Red Crescent museums in Geneva, and the galleries.

Many popular movements have started to establish peace museums, in Tokyo, in East Berlin, in West Berlin, in Samarkand (Uzbekestan), in Canberra Australia, in Verdun France, in Namibia and in other places museums have sprouted. It is, no doubt, high time to think of having such a museum in Egypt, which has always been known as a land of peace.

The report "The Third Way" deals with the Peace Institutes and how to create a world movement for peace through education. It starts with a statement by Teilhard de Chardin, who wrote immediately after the first atomic bomb had exploded, that the atomic age had completely undermined the age-old axiom that the very act of war implied the possibility of victory for one side or the other. From the moment the atomic bomb was exploded the situation was reversed: wars were no longer initiated by man's desire for self-preservation since self-preservation could only be achieved through peace.

A large scale movement for the creation of peace institutes is underway. In both the US and Canada, national institutes for peace have been established. The American administration allocated $16 million from the Defence Department budget for this purpose, while the Canadian government allocated $7 million for the International Peace and Security Institute in Ottawa. Ireland established in 1984 the Irish Peace Institute with support and sponsorship from the University of Limerick in the south and the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland, and Cooperation North which is a voluntary non-political organisation dedicated to building mutual respect and understanding between the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Egypt is, to my mind, equally ripe for the establishment of such an institute the aim of which would be to promote education and curriculum development for peace building and to stimulate action relative to peace-building.

Mursi Saad El-Din

Time for a check-up

It's been a busy month for health care in Egypt, with two major conferences providing participants with information on quality health care and various suggestions for the improvement of the national health care system. The first national conference on quality in health care, organised by the Ministry of Health, held in Cairo last month, was attended by several dozen members of Egypt's public and private health-care sectors. During the three-day conference, lectures, seminars and workshops were conducted stressing basic concepts in quality assurance, application of quality control in health, mobilisation of resources and the roles various sectors should play to ensure quality in health care. In another major development for the health sector, the World Health Organisation's regional office for Eastern Mediterranean countries held its 42nd session in Cairo last week, covering a wide range of issues related to health. The conference, which stressed quality assurance and work ethics, was attended by representatives of the 22 member countries, 32 governmental and non-governmental organsiations and three United Nations delegations





Some patients's lives are saved, but for others the insurance scheme is a chance to get medicines they don't need

photos: Mohamed Lutfi and Emad Abdel-Hadi

The price of health

As Egypt hosts a range of local and regional health conferences, **Jasmine Maklad** and **Nermin Nizar** take a look at the future of Egypt's health care provisions in the cost recovery age

Ask almost anyone, from the man in the street to senior government officials, and they will all tell you the same thing: the health system in Egypt is barely functioning and grossly inefficient. Currently, the various independent health organisations which coexist each have an independent budget and hierarchy, which inevitably increases costs. They are in dire need of funds, their facilities are dilapidated and they offer poor quality services.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Cost Recovery for Health Project (CRHP), which is already underway in Egypt, hopes to change this by reorganising the distribution of health subsidies so the service can recover a portion of its costs. Accordingly, only certain categories will receive subsidised care while others will pay fees — effectively cross-subsidising the health service. Alongside this system the USAID proposal includes plans to upgrade the service and help the system function effectively, among other things.

While the project promises a better overall health service, some fear it will only lead to a complete privatisation of the system, depriving the underprivileged of health care altogether. "The problem with CRHP is that costs are already recovered in most public hospitals," said Dr Khaled Mansour, coordinator for the health policies and systems programme at the Association for Health and Environmental Development (AHED), which strongly opposes the USAID health reforms.

"It is not uncommon for patients or their families to buy medicine and medical equipment in public hospitals where they are supposed to be supplied free of charge," Mansour explained. This is the case despite funds allocated to medical supplies, which totaled LE9,020,000 for the '92-'93 fiscal year, he added.

But according to USAID officials, that is exactly why cost recovery is being implemented. "Currently 90 per cent of hospitalisation is handled through Ministry of Health facilities, and in reality people pay: they pay for supplies, medicine, equipment and food, among other things," said a senior USAID official.

Free health care is in fact a myth, and everyone acknowledges it. Because the system is dysfunctional it requires a structured means to put financial services to efficient use, the official explained. "Health finance must be rationalised: that is why cost recovery has been brought in."

"The main problem facing Egypt's health system is a serious lack of funding," according to Dr Hassan El-Kalla, CRHP director and undersecretary at the Ministry of Health. "Funds are needed to improve the ministry's existing 250 health facilities, which have been neglected over the past 30 years. We cannot wait for government resources — we need the people's cooperation," he said. But just how able to provide those needed funds is the Egyptian population?

Mansour explains that, in reality, the cost recovery project aims essentially at increasing the percentage of health costs paid for by patients. But the truth is that patients are already paying 54 per cent of the health budget, according to estimates in the April 1995 draft of the national health accounts of Egypt, compiled by the Central Agency for Auditing.

El-Kalla assures that, under the new system, patients will be paying less than 50 per cent of the real cost. "Cost recovery is in the best interests of the poorer and middle classes of society," El-Kalla claimed. "It will improve the quality of health services provided by the public sector, which at the moment are not commendable." Soon patients will receive private sector services at public sector prices, he added.

For cost recovery to work, a mechanism to determine just who qualifies for subsidised care and who doesn't is essential. "We want to better target subsidies and to do so will require a particular plan to determine who really needs them," the USAID official stressed.

While El-Kalla claims that the basic framework for determining those eligible for subsidised care is already in place, the determining factors seem lacking in clarity. "We will have a social system which differs from facility to facility. Patients who fall in certain categories, such as widows, single parents and low income earners will be able to take advantage of subsidised prices for health care," El-Kalla explained. Others who do not qualify but claim inability to pay will be placed under social investigation. Emergency services will be available to all.

The actual scope and amount of this health subsidy are not yet clear; nor is the issue of whether or not subsidised prices will be affordable to the vast majority of the population, and whether cost recovery means some will just have to go without.

When it comes to the future of the health system in Egypt, not everyone is content, to say the least, with the USAID proposal. "This system will definitely not result in better health care," asserts Mansour. "What it will do is burden the underprivileged sectors of society without immediately improving services," he stressed.

In defiance of the cost recovery project, AHED has suggested what they believe to be a more practical, effective and socially equitable alternative. They propose the Ministry of Health devote its efforts to developing a comprehensive primary health care sector.

"There are tens of thousands of primary health units in Egypt, almost every Egyptian lives within three kilometres of one. Improving their services would definitely be a step in the right direction," according to Mansour. If the $92,000,000 allocated to applying the CRHP were directed towards providing more efficient services at the primary level, the majority of cases could be treated without hospitalisation, Mansour suggested. "The existing budget will, at that stage, be sufficient to cover the country's health requirements," he said.

According to El-Kalla, despite the CRHP, Ministry of Health resources will in fact be re-allocated from hospitals to the primary health care units, which under the current system are last in line. "Because the government will be spending less to maintain the services in hospitals it will be able to re-direct finances to the primary health care sector," he claimed.

But despite opposition, cost recovery is well underway, burrowing into the various health sectors. Pilot projects have been a 'great success' but whether or not the government will be capable of implementing cost recovery on a national scale, while maintaining desirable standards of efficiency in health care, remains to be seen.

Great expectations, many constraints

Zeinab Abul-Gheit examines the challenges facing the Health Insurance Organisation which plans to include more beneficaries

The health insurance system, first introduced in 1964, was aimed at providing cost-effective health care for the masses. But with the government unable to bear all the cost of the system alone, it was decided that subscribers should participate and pay a monthly fee towards the scheme.

The subscriber's share of the cost remains extremely small. Workers pay only one per cent of their monthly salary towards the system while their employers pay another three per cent. Students in public schools pay only LE4 annually for the service, while their couterparts in private schools pay a maximum of LE50 a year. Meagre subscription fees have meant the government requires ever-increasing amounts of money just to provide the service, never mind maintain or upgrade it.

According to Dr Rifaat Radwan, director of the Health Insurance Organisation (HIO), over the past 30 years the material resources of the organisation rose by 323 per cent but were offest by sky rocketting expenses which rose by 884 per cent over the same period. Currently the annual budget for health insurance for students runs at around LE1 billion, of which the government pays around LE410 million.

Dr Radwan added that the cost of the service incurred by the HIO has increased considerably due to updated diagnosing techniques, treatments and technology and the constantly soaring price of medicine. "The result has been a severe deficit since 1987. This deficit accumulated, reaching LE197 million in 1994," said Radwan.

It is for this reason that a legislative law is due to be considered when a new parliament gets elected next month. The law will allow for higher subscription fees and create new sources of finance to help balance the current discrepancy between revenues and expenses. "This will definitely make a difference to the service," assured Radwan. Others agree: "Our hope lies with the draft law: we expect it to solve the problem of debt and everything that goes with it," said Dr Zakariya Gad, head of the Pharmacists' Syndicate.

Even the head of the Mines and Quarries Syndicate, Fouad Darahem, is in favour of the move to raise subscriptions. "But the increase must be paid for by employers and not by workers," he stressed. Darahem blames the government for the deteriorating health insurance service: "They expanded the insurance umbrella without providing the basic infrastructure and means to provide health care, particularly in remote areas where the shortage of hospitals, doctors and means of treatment is striking."

Although officials claim lack of finance is the main hindrance to the insurance scheme and the quality of its service, some doctors believe that the only real problem is the patients. "Many patients believe that even though they are not ill, they are entitled to medicine as long as they pay their subscription to the HIO scheme," complained Dr Mohamed Abdel-Gawad, director of the Heliopolis Health Insurance Unit.

"It's bad enough knowing that the maximum number of patients a doctor should examine daily is 36 and that here they examine over 60," said Gawad. "But even worse is that, of the 600 pensioners that visit the health unit daily, many are not ill," he complained. "We have a sufficient number of doctors but these hypochondriacs just waste our time."

"The doctor should have prescribed me two vitamin tablets a day instead of just one," Mohsen El-Gammal, a pensioner, complained angrily. Asked about other shortcomings, El-Gammal criticised the long waiting period for examination and the overcrowded waiting rooms.

The conditions doctors work in are hardly satisfactory. Apart from the huge number of patients, unneccessary cases and the dilapidated state of hospitals, financial incentives are practically nonexistent. "Is it humane that under this sytem a doctor still only gets PT20 for a home visit?" asked Abdel-Gawad.

"Doctors are treated unjustly; they do not receive financial compensation or their right to promotion," said Mohamed Ashour, a retired legal advisor and an HIO patient. Others complained about the bureaucracy which haunts the system. "To obtain certain medications, patients must get approval from a committee of specialists. The chances of getting medicine are very slim and this procedure takes time and effort which jeopardise the patients health," said Amin Ibrahim, a salesman at a pharmaceutical company. Ibrahim proposed that the consent of one specialist should be enough to obtain the medicines.

"Despite financial difficulties and other pressures, the health insurance scheme is the best system for providing medical services to limited income groups who cannot afford the rising prices of medical treatment," according to Dr Hamdi El-Sayed, head of the Doctors' Syndicate. Today the HIO has expanded to cover one third of Egypt's population. In September 1994 the total number of students covered under the scheme was 14.1 million in addition to 5.3 million workers.

El-Sayed said that although some insurance units may not be ideal, as a whole the service is successful. Students' insurance in particular has proved to be a great success. The HIO expanded its umbrella to include school children in 1993 and since then, over 10,100,000 students have come under its care. Unlike other sectors of the HIO, student coverage is most successful because it is partly financed by income from the cigarrette tax which brings in around LE200 million a year.

"All this system lacks is a means to raise financial resources," said El-Sayed. He suggested that all citizens and various activities should be taxed and the revenue be devoted to the health insurance system. "Organisations, unions and institutions can alleviate the government's burden by carrying out their own medical insurance service and contributing to the existing one," he added.

Radwan more or less agrees: "The success of this system is based on three things: the availability of sufficient financial and human resources, extension of the service to remote areas and inclusion of other medical institutions within the system." He suggested a definite policy be determined and implemented within a certain period of time. "This must be done to avoid individual politicians and cabinet reshuffling having any effect on the system," Dr Radwan said.

"Expansion of the health insurance system is Egypt's best hope for better health care in the future," Hamdi El-Sayed stressed.

Learning faster, learning better or not at all?

Do physicians receive adequate professional training in Egypt? **Gihan Shahine** investigates the present state of affairs and future plans for improvement

Dr Abdel-Azim Ramadan has lately sparked off much concern about medical care and education in Egypt, writing a series of articles entitled "From the hospital to life after death." The articles present a personal experience denouncing the entire medical system.

Due to a sudden decrease in blood sugar, Ramadan slipped into a coma and was rushed to Al-Ahram public hospital. There, he claims, the doctor in charge — a specialist in endemic diseases — diagnosed an embolism and requested a brain X-ray. His wife, horrified by the news, transferred Ramadan to a specialised hospital where a bottle of glucose brought him back to consciousness.

Unfortunately, this kind of incident is not unique to this particular hospital. Ramadan's critical articles have raised some very important questions: are Egyptian doctors trained to an adequate standard? Are there any shortcomings in the medical education system? And, if so, has the government taken any steps to improve it?

"We receive hardly any training at all after graduation," complains Hala El-Sayed Ali, a recent graduate from Ain Shams Medical School. Ali's words are echoed by all her colleagues who are supposedly being trained in their pre-residency year. All the training they get in this year boils down to "passing on requests for blood transfusions, blood pictures, analysis and X-rays", according to Ali.

"It is a waste of time," she declares. "We are not allowed to lay a finger on patients. Besides, our seniors are too busy to give us any attention."

Once the pre-residency year is over, only 20 per cent of post-graduates get appointed to universities — some as academic staff and the majority as resident doctors in hospitals affiliated to the university. The other 80 per cent spend their three years of residency in training hospitals or hospitals affiliated to the Ministry of Health, where they learn almost nothing, according to doctors.

"We work haphazardly," admits Fadia Hassan, a resident doctor in Shubra public hospital. Hassan explains that no guidance or supervision is provided, which explains why "the mortality rate is extremely high in the hospital."

Eager to learn, Hassan once asked her supervisor to explain why she was using a certain drug. The answer: "Because we always use it." People like Hassan have no alternative but to train themselves. "I just read books and try to apply the information to the patients myself," says Hassan.

But post-graduates are not all the same. "The majority of resident doctors, who get a salary of LE 100 a month, have to scrounge for extra money in private hospitals and dispensaries," says Dr Gamal Fahmi Loza, head of Helwan Fever Hospital. "They don't have any time to learn or train." In private hospitals the situation is no better, since juniors are given no responsibility, he adds. They get money for serving as "qualified nurses" and learn practically nothing.

Loza believes that 70 to 80 per cent of doctors are not trustworthy. "It is a phenomenon that has been there for almost ten years," he declares. "Part of the reason is that academic study is largely theoretical. Besides, the large number of students reduces each one's share of the professor's attention. Most of them, if not all, depend on private lessons. The steep prices of books, about LE700 for one book, also make it quite impossible for a student to do much reading."



We have the latest equipment, but what about the training? *photo: Abdel-Wahab El-Seheti*

Yet some experts insist the picture is not so dim. "The role of the university is certainly not confined to its resident staff," assures Dr Mohamed Awad Tageddin, deputy dean of educational and student affairs at Ain Shams University. "Many post-graduates working in other areas conduct their studies and are trained in intensive care at universities," adds Tageddin, one of the many professors who take part in training in public hospitals like Al-Matariya, Al-Sahel in Shubra and Abbassiya Chest hospital.

"One of the major roles universities play is in holding and participating in scientific conferences, both at home and abroad, discussing any of the 48 branches of medicine. The government supports the conferences and invites highly specialised doctors from abroad to present the latest research in the field of medicine," he says.

Not all physicians, though, give much credit to conferences. "Conferences are certainly useful, but we do not have the time to attend them," says a 30-year-old resident doctor at Ain Shams Specialised Hospital. Besides, private pharmaceutical companies hold most of the conferences and impose a minimum attendance fee of LE100 — beyond the capability of most physicians in Egypt, he complained.

"I think conferences are useless," says Hassan. "They just help us in our studies. Most probably, the knowledge presented in conferences requires facilities with which our hospitals are not furnished. Also, most of the time we cannot use drugs recommended at the conference because we can only use drugs which are on the hospital list."

The top graduates who receive their training at university hospitals — not more than 20 per cent — are more fortunate than others. They receive the best training in Egypt, according to many, and the opportunity to get scholarships abroad.

"We have a very high standard of training in our department," asserts Dr Emad Fadli, former head of the neurology department at Ain Shams University. The reason, according to Fadli, is that post-graduates receive constant training and direct, thorough supervision during their residency year. "In addition there is not a large number of resident doctors, so everyone has the chance to handle a case on his own," Fadli explains.

The department is truly dynamic, he says. Every week, a scientific meeting is held to discuss the different cases, the way of handling these cases and the results, Fadli adds. Assessment of doctors' performance follows. Conferences are held by the department every three months. "Last March the Arab Union for Neurology held a congress where all Arab countries, European countries and America took part. They were all impressed by the professional standards of Egyptian physicians and want to hold more conferences in Egypt," he claims.

Only university staff physicians have access to the outside world. A fair number of them get scholarships to complete their higher studies or are trained to use new technology. Others travel to attend conferences abroad — but these are mostly professors who go on their own initiative.

Tamer Saleh, assistant lecturer in anesthesia at Ain Shams University, is one of 272 Egyptian doctors who received a fellowship to study in Britain in 1994. Having worked abroad, Saleh draws comparisons between professional training in Egypt and in Europe.

"The main difference rests in the method of training itself," Saleh explains. In Egypt, especially in the university hospitals where Saleh used to work, resident doctors handle patients on their own and get experience. In England, on the other hand, they remain under direct supervision and are not allowed to take charge. "So in Egypt physicians learn faster, but in England they tend to learn better," according to Saleh.

To bridge the existing gap in the training system, a decision was made two months ago to set up a board for medical specialisation. The board's main role is to lay down training courses for the different specialisations and define the average years of training a physician should complete before becoming a specialist. It will also have to prepare accredited training centres, professional trainers and define the type of final exams trainees should take. The trainee will ultimately receive a certificate with the accredited hours of training and the assessment of his/her performance during that period.

"The board will cater to every physician in Egypt," says Hamdi El-Sayed, head of the doctors' syndicate. "It will mainly concentrate on family physicians, who are the backbone of medicine. Besides, according to plan, the board will supervise the continuous medical training that all physicians should have throughout their career."

The board is chaired by Minister of Education Dr Hussein Kamel Bahaaeddin; the Minister of Health, Dr Ali Abdel-Fattah, has been appointed deputy chairman. The administrative board also brings together five former ministers of health, the present Minister of Housing, Dr Maher Mahran, and Minister of Local Government Dr Mahmoud El-Sherif. The board is partly financed by the Ministry of Health and the remainder will depend on the still undetermined fees the physician, or the hospital he works for, pays.

Though some doctors still have doubts about the practicality of the board plan, thinking it might leave opportunities for recommendations and some wheeling and dealing in getting certificates, they all agree it is a very good step forward.

Edited by **Fayza Hassan**

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Al-Ahram: A *Diwan* of contemporary life



In a fifth part of a series on Halayeb: The Secret File, **Dr Yunan Labib Rizk** examines the link between Egypt's strained relations with the West and the development of the Halayeb crisis during the Nasser era



In 1958 major events developed in contemporary Egyptian and Arab history: the unity between Egypt and Syria, the Iraqi revolution, the rising High Dam and, last but not least, the crisis of the Egyptian-Sudanese borders. Somewhere at the centre of all these events was the personality of the late Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel-Nasser.

Two years previously, the newly independent Republic of Sudan emerged on the regional map. Egypt quickly recognised the fledgling nation to the south. No longer linked to Sudan by the special legal relation that had existed since 1820, Egypt began to draw up a new policy with regard to their common borders.

The new policy involved transforming the status of the frontier from a political boundary to an international boundary. It also involved all the procedures related to the demarcation of the boundary.

Other nations in the region bordering on Sudan, such as Ethiopia, had to undergo a similar process. Egypt only began the process after a two year delay, and at the time under unfavourable circumstances. The delay in part can be ascribed to the shock Egyptians received from the unexpected separation of Sudan and what was perceived as a form of betrayal on the part of the federalists. Also contributing to the delay were other policies Egypt was pursuing during this period (1956-58). The refusal of the West to finance the construction of the High Dam and the nationalisation of the Suez Canal which led to the tripartite invasion of Egypt by Great Britain, France and Israel, overshadowed the business of regulating the borders with Sudan.

The fact that these events were also linked with the construction of the High Dam and the implications that it had with the border region also strengthened the feeling in Egypt that it would be fruitless to open a front against Sudan while under attack from all the other powers. At the same time, once the border issue was broached in the beginning of 1958, these same circumstances gave rise to the first border crisis in Egyptian-Sudanese relations, or what we can term the first Halayeb crisis.

Before discussing the history of the crisis, we must first allude to the situation that was bequeathed to the revolutionary epoch from the previous postponing of the demarcation of the Egyptian-Sudanese borders. A British Foreign Office document (FO 371/131350xc13696) elucidates three important aspects.

First, until the 1920s, this desert area lacked a proper government administration apparatus. Second, the four groups of the Bishari tribe living in the Halayeb triangle were cut off from the main body of the Bishari tribe living along the Red Sea. Third, the administration of these four groups was delegated to the sheikh of the Egyptian Abaida tribe, Abdel-Azim El-Abadi.

Given these circumstances, it is easy to perceive how Egyptians could not imagine that the border question would become an issue, particularly after the revolutionary regime had granted autonomy to Sudan and quickly recognised the nascent republic. Nevertheless, they had to awaken to the reality of the situation once signs of the border crisis loomed on the horizon.

Two issues ignited the crisis. The first was Sudan's demands for compensation for the anticipated flooding of some portions of Nubia by the High Dam. Sudan's demands were so excessive that negotiations had to be suspended.

The second involved the referendum for unity with Syria. Suddenly the area containing Halayeb became the focus of dispute. Sudan's claim on the area was based on the administrative control it had over the area, regardless of the fact that this was in form rather than in practice. It also argued that since the sheikh of the Bisharis took part in the 1953 parliamentary elections, the Halayeb triangle constituted one of the Sudanese electoral districts which would take part in the post-independence elections.

It was an unfortunate coincidence that the forthcoming referendum on Egyptian-Syrian unity also necessitated demarcating Egyptian electoral districts. One of these would encompass Halayeb. From Cairo's standpoint, not only was Sudanese administration non-existent in the area, but also, after Sudan's independence, there was no further justification for perpetuating its administration over Egyptian territory. At this juncture, the clash was bound to happen.

The first Halayeb crisis lasted no more than three weeks. Antagonism began on 1 February with a memorandum submitted to the Sudanese government by Seif El-Yazil Khalifa, the Egyptian ambassador in Khartoum, and it ended with the Egyptian government's statement that it agreed to the Sudanese request to defer discussion on the issue until the conclusion of the Sudanese elections.

After outlining the status of the political borders and the administrative arrangements to which they had been subjected, the memorandum concluded, "Our fraternal nation, Sudan, has gained independence with Egypt's blessings. Egypt was the first to act on Sudan's behalf and to recognise it. Therefore, there remains no justification for maintaining a situation that conflicts with the nature of things, now that both Egypt and Sudan have the means and capacity to administer their respective territories and to organise the affairs of their subjects without complications arising from confusing political sovereignty with administrative control.

"Therefore, in the interests of administrative expediency, the tribal regions shall no longer determine the political boundaries between our two nations. There are no valid reasons that should prevent the members of a single tribe, according to their place of residence, to be considered subject to the sovereignty of the country in which they reside.

"As for the legal standpoint, there is no doubt whatsoever that all the decisions regulated to administer these areas cannot alter an international agreement or the borders stipulated in an international agreement. Simultaneously, presence by virtue of administrative jurisdiction does not confer the right of sovereignty nor the right of ownership, regardless of the duration of that jurisdiction."

On 13 February, the Egyptian ambassador in Khartoum submitted another memorandum to the Sudanese foreign minister. In this document Cairo informed Khartoum that "In view of the forthcoming referendum over the formation of the United Arab Republic which is to be held on 21 February 1958, the Egyptian government, exercising its authority established under the principles of sovereignty, has decided to facilitate the participation of voters residing in those Egyptian territories that had formerly come under dual administration so that they may exercise their electoral rights."

In the course of the following week, events escalated rapidly. Sudanese President Mohamed Ahmed Mahgoub came to Cairo to meet with President Gamal Abdel-Nasser and other Egyptian officials. The meeting held on the afternoon of 17 February bore no results.

The following day Egypt's minister plenipotentiary in Khartoum asked Sudan to withdraw its troops that had entered Halayeb to the south of the 22nd degree parallel. The Sudanese government refused to comply with this request.

Two days later, on 20 February 1958, the UN Security Council held an extraordinary session in response to Sudan's claim that the actions of the Egyptian government constituted a threat to the peace and security of the region. The discussions extended throughout the day. In addition to the representatives from Egypt and Sudan, representatives from the US, Japan, the United Kingdom, Iraq, France and Canada also participated in the meeting. The Council issued the following statement:

"After hearing the positions of the representatives from Egypt and Sudan and after having received confirmation from the representative of Egypt that his government has decided to defer the settlement of the border issue until the conclusion of elections in Sudan, the Council sees no need for Sudan's complaint to remain on the Council's agenda."

The primary cause for Egypt's quick acquiescence to Sudan's request to postpone discussions of the border question until the conclusion of the Sudanese elections can be traced, we believe, to the attitudes of the Security Council members. Notably, Sir Pierson Dickson, the UK representative was believed to favour the Sudanese viewpoint, and Iraq, the Arab representative in the Council at that time, was antagonistic to the Egyptian position due to the tensions that existed between Cairo and Baghdad. Given the potentially antagonistic environment, Cairo no doubt wanted to avoid an unfavourable resolution. At the same time, officials in Egypt discovered that Addis Ababa was encouraging Sudan in its antagonism toward Egypt and urging it to coordinate in order to put pressure on the government in Cairo.

During the Security Council meeting, Sudan laid claim to territories north of the 22nd degree parallel. The arguments, gleaned from an assortment of memoranda and statements continue to be the same arguments reiterated by Sudan today.

Finally, Sudan maintains that Mirghani Hamza, the chargé d'affaires of the Sudanese Ministry for Foreign Affairs, informed Seif El-Khalifa, the Egyptian ambassador in Khartoum, on 8 February, that Sudan never signed the 1899 accord. This, Hamza claimed, discharged Sudan from any obligation to recognise the accord. However, in so saying, he ignored the principle of succession in international law. According to this principle, a new nation inherits the rights and obligations of the nation it has deposed. Nevertheless, in his speech before the parliament following the declaration of the Sudanese Republic on 1 January 1956, the prime minister said, "Sudan will not be constrained to adhere to those treaties or accords which had been concluded on its behalf prior to independence and which had not been submitted for review and ratification."

Secondly, they argued that for the past 50 years, the people of this region had been paying taxes to the Sudanese government to which they were subject ,and that the government had allocated funds from its budget to provide security and services to the region.

Their third argument was voiced by Ibrahim Ahmed, the Sudanese minister of finance, in his meeting of 13 February ,with the prime minister and Mirghani Hamza. "To accept Egypt's demand," he said, "would lead to the division of the tribes residing along the borders. It would be wise to maintain the current situation whereby these tribes are gathered in a single territory."

The fourth argument in their case was contained in the complaint submitted by Yaqoub Othman, Sudan's permanent representative at the UN, to Dag Hammarskjöld, the then UN secretary-general. Its text read, "These two areas belong to Sudan by virtue of the agreements signed between the Egyptian and Sudanese governments in 1902 and 1907. Since that time they have been under Sudanese sovereignty and administration. The inhabitants of the area are Sudanese and they have never once participated in an Egyptian referendum or parliamentary election. Moreover, they have participated in their capacity as Sudanese citizens in the Sudanese parliamentary elections of 1953 in accordance with the agreement signed between Great Britain and Egypt in February 1953." We should note here that the wording "agreements signed between the Egyptian and Sudanese governments..." refers to arrangements concluded under the Mustafa Fahmi government and thus lends these arrangements stronger validity than they merit.

Egypt responded to these arguments via its ambassador in Khartoum and various other memoranda and statements. However, before proceeding, we should note the legal formula, whereby Sudan prior to 1952 was referred to as the "dual administration". Also, all decisions pertaining to Sudan made by the minister of interior were referred to as "administrative arrangements." It is interesting that Great Britain's representative in the UN, in spite of his obvious bias toward Sudan, continued to use the same term.

Egypt's first argument was therefore based on this understanding and held that such administrative arrangements did not confer any political rights.

Secondly, Egypt did not raise the issue of the participation of inhabitants in the Halayeb triangle in Sudan's 1953 parliamentary elections since, in the words of Seif El-Yazil Khalifa, "These were only for self-determination. Sudan had not yet gained its independence and Egypt was still one of the partners in the dual administration."

In its third argument, Egypt made reference to the Gamela sector of Ethiopia which, in 1902, Addis Ababa had leased to Sudan as a commercial centre, with the stipulation that it would not be used for political or military purposes. When Ethiopia requested its return in the wake of the Sudan's declaration of independence. Khartoum complied. Egypt requested that the area to the north of the 22nd parallel should receive similar treatment.

Apart from the arguments forwarded by both sides, a third party sought to diagnose the crisis. This party, which had played a major role in instigating the crisis, was Great Britain. Its Foreign Office files reveal a most interesting attitude.

When the crisis first erupted, Great Britain's representative in the Security Council, Sir Pierson Dickson, received instructions to take a position sympathetic to Sudan. Great Britain was still bristling from the lesson it learned from the Suez invasion and relations between Cairo and London were still cut off. However, Great Britain's position changed as the crisis escalated. It issued instructions to Dickson to advise the Sudanese representative to reflect carefully before submitting his case to the international court of justice and to desist entirely should Egypt do so. The author of these instructions wrote, "I agree that in the 1899 agreement Egypt has a strong point, and for this reason, I feel Egypt has the sort of case that might win at the Hague, but I do not see why Egypt should now be allowed by Sudan to use the court as an instrument for her own purpose."

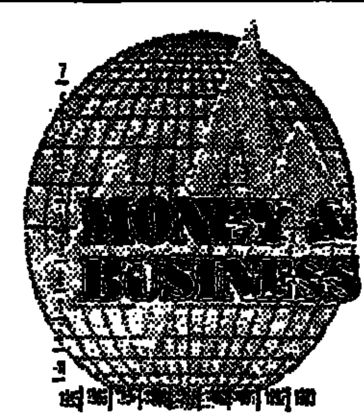
As for London's ambassador in Sudan, he wrote that the Sudanese parties were using the conflict that arose over Halayeb to achieve gains in the political contest between them. London wrote back instructing the ambassador to play down the government's support for Khartoum.

History may not repeat itself, yet once again we can observe how the current regime in Khartoum is resorting to every means to make political gains at home. Its attempts will be short lived, particularly once the Sudanese learn the true facts behind Halayeb, facts that are nowhere as evident as in the British Foreign Office files.

The author is a renowned historian and a professor of modern history at Ain Shams University.



MONEY & BUSINESS



Misr Insurance takes part in Morocco conference

Misr Insurance Co., under the chairmanship of Abdel-Aziz Mustafa, will take part in the Arab Investment Conference as well as in the "Arab and the World Conference" to be held on October 11 in Casablanca, Morocco.

Misr Insurance company is the official sponsor of both events.

New companies established

The companies committee at the Ministry of Economy, headed by Ahmed Fouad Atta, approved the establishment of 27 companies, 15 of which are joint-stock companies whose authorised capitals amount to LE22 million. The remaining 12 companies are limited liability companies whose capitals amount to LE920,000. The new companies operate in the area of tourism, contracting, industry and business services.

Transaction surge for Faisal Bank

Abdel-Hamid Abou Moussa, governor of the Faisal Islamic bank of Egypt stated that the bank's board of directors has approved the fiscal accounts of the current year ending 1915 AH, 29 May 1995, which were also approved by the bank's auditors. The annual report including the profit and loss accounts will be reviewed by the general assembly, due to hold its meeting on 17 November 1995.

Accounts show that the volume of transactions rose from LE5,709 million in 1994 to LE6,373 million in 1995, an 11.6 per cent increase. The volume of assets increased from LE5,615 million to LE6,227 million, over the same period, while the volume of deposits rose from LE4,511 million to LE4,933 million, a 12.4 per cent increase. Revenues totaled LE350 million in 1995 compared to LE 251 million last year, signifying a 39.1 per cent increase.

Profits reached LE303 million in the current year compared to LE210 million in 1994 recording a 44,1 per cent increase.

The quota of profits distributed for investment accounts totaled LE264 million compared to last years LE201 million, an increase of over 22 per cent. While allocation increased from LE9 million to LE46 million.



Abdel-Hamid Abou Moussa

Nizhny Novgorod Region opens its doors to investment

The Nizhny Novgorod Chamber of Commerce industry and trade representation of the Russian Federation in the Arab Republic of Egypt offer a unique opportunity to become acquainted with the great economic potential of the Nizhny Novgorod Region (NNR).

Days of Nizhny Novgorod Region in Egypt will feature the region's most promising industrial, engineering and trade opportunities. Over 60 directors, executives and managers of the NNR enterprises will be available and glad to discuss the rich diversity of opportunities available at NNR.

The delegation, headed by the vice-governor of the Nizhny Novgorod Region Administration, V N Evlampiev, the mayor of Nizhny Novgorod City, I.P.Sklyarov, and the president of the Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry, G M Khodyrev. During the stay in Egypt the delegation plans to hold meetings and discussions at the Cairo and Alexandria chambers of commerce and the Association of Egyptian Businessmen as well as with Egyptian entrepreneurs.

The Nizhny Novgorod Region, Russia's third largest, covers a vast area of 31,000 square miles and has a population of 3.72 million. The city of Nizhny Novgorod is located 400 kilometres east of Moscow, a convenient 45 minutes flight or overnight train ride from Russia's capital. As one of the most prominent historical centres of Russian civilisation and political evolution, the NNR is now the place where most radical reforms are conceived and tested.

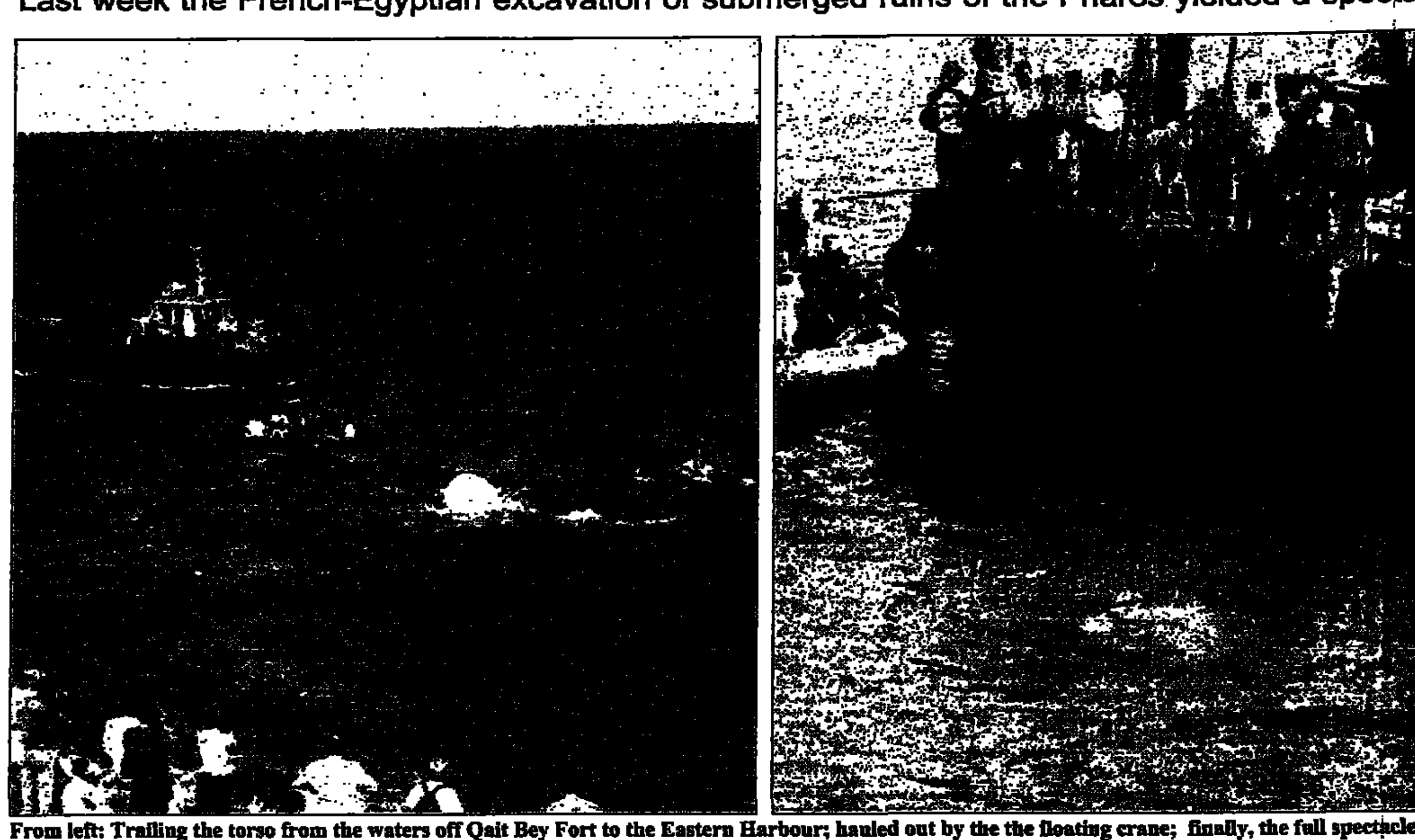
The NNR has the highest concentration of transportation networks in Russia — 767 miles of railways, 8,701 miles of roads and 646 miles of waterways. The international airport has regular charter flights to Germany, Turkey, India, the UAE and other overseas destinations.

The NNR also has a solid business support infrastructure with more than 650 industrial enterprises and a workforce of 700,000 people — a solid stratum of skilled human resources. The NNR business community comprises over 40 banks (several in the SWIFT system) and 130 financial service firms, including insurers and investment companies, domestic, foreign and those operating by joint venture. Nizhny is also home to dozens of consulting, auditing, real estate and wholesale firms.

In Nizhny Novgord, a competitive marketplace is not just a vision for the future, it is the environment of today. Now that the first stage of economic transformation has ended, private enterprises account for 60 percent of the region's gross industrial output. Since 1992, over 900 enterprises in various sectors have been privatised. And 50 new companies are registered in the city of Nizhny Novgorod daily.

A lighthouse on the horizon?

Last week the French-Egyptian excavation of submerged ruins of the Pharos yielded a spectacular catch. **Hala Halim** navigates among the hypotheses





From left: Trailing the torso from the waters off Qait Bey Fort to the Eastern Harbour; hauled out by the the floating crane; finally, the full spectacle

photos courtesy of Emad Khalil

The spectacle of the granite torso of a woman hauled out of the water brought to mind the image of Venus emerging from the sea. A Venus, in this case, tied and hauled out by a floating crane, to emerge, still glistening from several centuries' sojourn underwater, into Alexandria's Eastern Harbour in the midday sun of Wednesday 4 October. An awed hush after she emerged, then the clapping from the ministerial, ambassadorial audience lined on the jetty, among a crowd of Alexandrians, while the cameras of CNN, Gédeon, ABC, WTN and Nile TV went on filming for the benefit of the global village. The event marked the last stage of the third phase of a French-Egyptian underwater excavation headed by Jean-Yves Empereur, director of the Centre d'Etudes Alexandrines (CEA). The site, off Qait Bey Fort, comprises a plethora of archaeological elements once part of monuments that stood on Pharos Island (after which the lighthouse of Alexandria was named).

Absent from the scene was the man whose initiative, as far back as the early 1960s, helped draw the authorities' reluctant attention to the site. It was the late Alexandrian diver Kamel Abu El-Saadat who guided the Egyptian navy to raise from the site in 1962 a colossal female statue. Thought to be of one of the Ptolemaic queens in the guise of Isis, the statue now lies on the lawn of the closed Maritime Museum in Stanley Bay. As the granite bust was pulled out of the water that Wednesday, the memory of Abu El-Saadat was very much on the mind of one of the spectators, underwater archaeologist Honor Frost who had worked with him on the site.

It was in response to Abu El-Saadat's appeals to the Egyptian antiquities authorities, that a UNESCO-sponsored preliminary survey of the site was undertaken by Frost in 1968. In her published report on the survey, "The Pharos site, Alexandria, Egypt", Frost discussed the significance of the site, described her findings and listed some of the objects seen. Among these were the crown of the Isis, two sets of sphinxes, and several male and female pillar-statues. About 30 years later, her report provided invaluable guidelines to the team of archaeologists currently working on the site.

Other than a tentative foray some 15 years ago by an Italian team, aided again by Abu El-Saadat, the site was conveniently ignored by the authorities between Frost's survey and the current excavation. Indeed, the decision was made a few years ago to dump concrete blocks, as part of a breakwater to safeguard the 15th century Qait Bey Fort (thought to have been built on part of the foundations of the lighthouse, and incorporating some of its masonry). Observing the concrete blocks atop the submerged antiquities in the course of shooting footage for her documentary on Hellenistic Alexandria, filmmaker Asmaa El-Bakri vehemently denounced the situation in the press. It was this that prompted the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) to approach Empereur to conduct a survey of the site.

The first phase of the operation, in October and November 1994, was sponsored by the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO). This consisted in a preliminary survey of the site by some 15 divers and archaeologists from the CEA, the IFAO and the SCA. A profusion of elements was observed on the sea bed, seemingly lying, layer on layer, in a jumbled heap of architectural styles — Pharaonic, Hellenistic and Roman. The two hypotheses advanced at the time could only be tentative, for the time constraints and poor visibility in the polluted site did not allow the divers to discern patterns.

According to the first hypothesis, the masonry and statuary had been hauled in Mamluke times from other parts of Alexandria and dumped in the harbour for protection, following the sacking of the city by the Cypriot king Pierre I de Lusignan in 1365. The commingling of Ancient Egyptian elements with Hellenistic ones was also explained by the Ptolemaic practice of reusing Pharaonic masonry. These two hypotheses combined, however, could not adequately account for the abundance of blocks in the site, the archaeologists allowed. Nevertheless, they were loath to pronounce on the provenance of stone and statuary, and certainly unwilling to make statements linking them with the lighthouse. "I cannot say we have found indisputable vestiges of the lighthouse...The survey we undertook resulted in more questions", Empereur had cautiously stated after the preliminary survey (see *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 2-8 March).

The second phase of the excavation (May and June 1995), bolstered with a fund of about 1.7 million French francs from Elf Foundation and Gédeon (a multi-media company filming the operation), allowed for more sophisticated equipment, a bigger team of divers, a more extensive survey and redefined hypotheses. More than 1,000 architectural blocks lying at a depth of 6 to 8 metres in the 2.25 hectare site were numbered, charted, sketched and photographed. When later analysed by a specialised computer programme, the more extensive data allowed for more definitive statements. "We have reason to believe that a number of blocks found are from the lighthouse", Empereur stated to the *Weekly* during the current excavation (resumed in mid-September and to end in late October).

A number of Aswan granite blocks found are so massive (varying between 50 to 75 tonnes in weight, and 5 to 12 metres in length) that they could not possibly have been dropped from a ship to protect the harbour, according to Empereur. On Strabo's description of the lighthouse as a monument in "white marble", Empereur comments that it would have been too expensive to import so much white marble, that "granite was very much in vogue with the Ptolemies", and that the granite blocks of the lighthouse would have been painted in white. Furthermore, the size of the submerged blocks bespeaks a huge monument, and the fact that some blocks are broken in two or three indicates that they must have fallen from a great height. "What high monument...stood on Pharos Island at the time other than the lighthouse?" posits Empereur. He substantiates his argument by emphasising the linear orientation of the blocks from immediately off shore, pointing towards the North East, as if fallen from a great height by the impact of a cataclysm.

The lighthouse of Alexandria planned by Ptolemy I, stood in a colonnaded court, had a square bottom storey, a second octagonal storey, a third circular one topped by a lantern crowned with a statue of Poseidon. It is known to have collapsed over several centuries with the impact of successive earthquakes. According to EM Forster in *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*, the lantern toppled about 700 AD and the octagon fell with the impact of an earthquake in 1100. When the Andalusian traveller Ibn Jubair (who set out on pilgrimage around 1182) reached Alexandria, the diminished lighthouse had gained in legendary stature, as seen in his (and other Arab travellers') hyperbolic descriptions, and was in use, partly for prayer ("Atop it [the lighthouse] is a mosque known to be blessed"). But the final destruction came through a series of earthquakes in the 14th century. Ibn Battuta's account of his two visits to Alexandria offers reliable dates for the last stages of destruction. On his first visit to the Pharos in 1326, he found "one of its faces in ruins" (after the earthquake of 1303). On his return in 1349, he found the condition of the lighthouse "so ruinous... that it was not possible to enter it". A few years later, a final earthquake undid whatever had remained of the structure.

But if the current theory accounts for the provenance of the granite blocks, do previous hypotheses on the rest of the masonry still stand? The computer-aided typology evolved over the summer has enabled the team to discern certain patterns. The programme used allowed for an interface between the topographical, graphic and textual data of the site, according to topographer Xavier Ablain. This yielded a series of maps isolating homogeneous elements — such as the huge granite blocks — and identifying areas where they are concentrated. Seeing that some of the elements could not be adequately observed, buried as they are under the concrete blocks, Honor Frost's unpublished map of the site, predating the breakwater, also proved a valuable source of information on the missing elements and the variations over thirty years.

The team's maps show three areas of concentration with distinguishable architectural vocabularies, explains archaeologist Dominique Allios. There is the distinct area with the gigantic blocks likely to have come from the lighthouse. Beyond that is a collocation of columns more akin in diametre and style to Graeco-Roman monuments than to Pharaonic temples, elaborates Allios. Further on are smaller elements some of which are Pharaonic, like a papyriform column with a cross carved on it and a number of sphinxes. The question that presents itself is, if the Hellenistic monuments that stood on the Pharos, such as the lighthouse and the sanctuary of Isis Pharia, collapsed into the sea at different stages, what interpretation can be placed on the presence of Pharaonic elements?

There is more than one interpretation for the Pharaonic in the site, maintains Jean-Pierre Corteggiani, an Egyptologist from the IFAO. Re-confirming the earlier hypothesis about the Ptolemies reusing statuary for the adornment of their newly founded capital and quarrying masonry from pre-existing buildings, Corteggiani now identifies Heliopolis as the source of most of the Pharaonic elements. "In those cases where we found a Pharaonic inscription giving the name of a god, it invariably pointed to Heliopolis", he comments. A closer source of granite than Aswan or the Red Sea, Heliopolis also had the added advantage of offering already cut stone — hence the sphinxes for example, explains Corteggiani. He also points out that Cleopatra's Needles — two obelisks long since moved to London and New York — had come from Heliopolis. Corteggiani adds that not all the carved stone and statuary found was fetched from Heliopolis, but some stone would have been carved in Alexandria, as is the case of the colossal male statue and its companion female statue (the one in the Maritime Museum).

Given that the Ptolemies ruled Egypt as Pharaohs, adds Corteggiani, Pharaonic traditions and stylistic conventions manifest themselves in the statuary dating from the Hellenistic period. A case in point is the granite female torso raised on 4 October. "Seeing its details more clearly once it was on land, we noticed the pleats of the dress and the beginning of the Isis knot", comments Empereur. He speculates that the statue represents "a Ptolemaic queen in the form of Isis, as in the case of the Isis in the Maritime Museum". Seeing that the latter had been found beside the male colossus of the same proportions, Empereur speculates that the two colossi represent a royal Ptolemaic couple, traditionally represented as the divine consorts. As to their position on the Pharos, Corteggiani suggests that the statues of the royal couple may have stood at the entrance to the lighthouse. Neither Empereur nor Corteggiani, however, dismiss their earlier suggestion that some of the objects on the site were deposited in Mamluke times to block the port. Indeed, Corteggiani adds that the same procedure had been followed in the late Roman period — hence the papyriform column with the cross.

Of the more than 2,000 archaeological blocks that litter the site, only about 30 are to be raised, not solely due to constraints of funds and time. Among the limitations, in Empereur's opinion, is the question of how best to display them. True, the Maritime Museum, where the objects are destined after desalination and restoration, seems unlikely to open to the public in the near future, for administrative reasons clear only to the SCA. A further reservation to the removal of more objects from the site is the observation made by Honor Frost on the necessity of regular treatment of objects removed from the sea, and the question whether such care would be provided.

To Empereur, the most appealing solution is a proposal made by two Alexandrian professors of oceanography to retain the objects *in situ* (thus preserving the narrative web in which they belong, as Empereur would have it) and to turn the site into an underwater archaeological park. The proposal was first made by Hassan El-Banna of the Faculty of Science, Alexandria University, and Selim Morcos, UNESCO senior consultant on Marine Sciences who has many extensive, published researches on Alexandrian marine archaeology. Both El-Banna and Morcos consider that the pollution in the site (due to its proximity to Alexandria's main sewage drain) will no longer pose a problem when the sanitary drainage project in Alexandria is completed towards the end of the decade.

The threat posed to the submerged antiquities, and by extension to a prospective underwater archaeological park, by the ongoing construction of the breakwater (only temporarily halted) was brought up by El-Banna during the press conference of 4 October. El-Banna put an appeal to the minister of culture that a more carefully studied means of protecting the fort should be devised with the aid of experts. He also broached the subject of establishing an underwater archaeological park. Elaborating on the importance of context for the display of artefacts, the minister expressed an openness to the proposal.

The underwater excavation constituted a rite of passage for the SCA's first, nascent team of marine archaeologists. The dexterity and calibre of the five Egyptian archaeologists, as well as of their French colleagues, was showcased the day the granite torso was raised. Although the strong current and unfavourable weather conditions of 4 October spelt a considerable risk to both divers and objects, the presence of the minister and media for the press conference dictated the public performance. It was the first object raised from the site by the team. Inevitably, the pre-planned procedure underwent impromptu modifications and the operation took more than two hours. The raising of the statue, in the words of archaeologist Mohamed Mustafa, was "a make or break operation. If it failed, all would be lost. If it succeeded all the rest would be plain sailing". And so it was: last week, many more objects were raised, among them the colossal male statue.

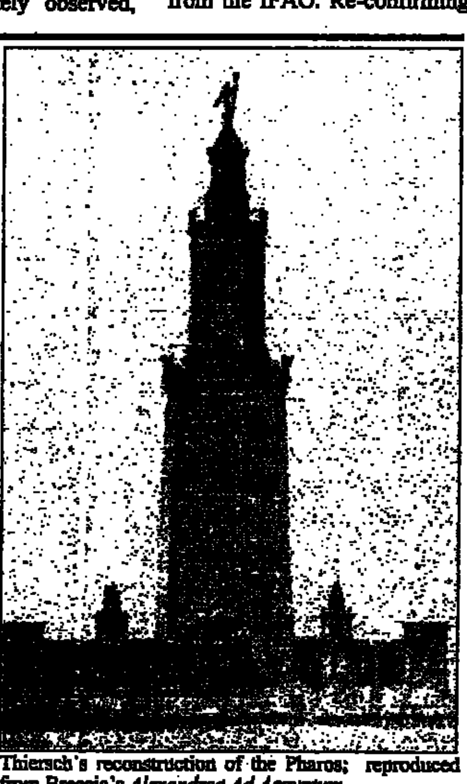
Wish you were here...

"I was in Egypt — longing to make for home but still kept lingering by the gods because I had failed to offer them acceptable hecatombs. Now, away from the shore, in the wash of waves, there lies an island that men call Pharos...In this place the gods kept me for twenty days".
Menelaus, *The Odyssey*, Homer, tr Walter Shewring, Oxford University Press: World Classics, 1980, p 43

"Pharos is a small oblong island, and lies quite close to the continent...This extremity itself of the island is a rock, washed by the sea on all sides, with a tower upon it of the same name as the island, admirably constructed of white marble, with several stories. Sostratus of Cnidus, a friend of the kings, erected it for the safety of mariners, as the inscription imports."
Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, tr H C Hamilton, vol III, London: Henry G Bohn, 1854, pp 226-7

"As for the lighthouse in Alexandria, many Egyptians and Alexandrians believe it to have been built by Alexander son of Philips [sic] of Macedonia...Others believe it was queen Dalukka who built it and made of it an observatory to dispel whatever enemy approaches the country...He who built it constructed it upon a glass base in the shape of a crayfish submerged under the sea on the edge of the promontory that extends from the sea to the shore. He placed on the top of it statues made of brass and other materials. One of the statues pointed with the index of its right hand constantly turning towards the sun in its diurnal course. If [the sun] was in the middle of its trajectory the finger pointed out its position. If the sun was sinking towards the horizon, the statue's hand was also lowered, turning continuously with it."
Al-Mass'oudi (d 956 AD), vol I, *Muruj Al-Dahab* (Pastures of Gold), Cairo, 1958, p 375

"One of the most magnificent of what we have seen of Alexandria's wonders is the lighthouse which God the Mighty and Sublime has led his servants to construct as a wonder to the beholder and a guide to the voyager, without which he would never reach the shores of Alexandria. [From the sea] you can see it from a distance of seventy miles from the city...From within, it is very spacious with many corridors, entrances and rooms to the extent that one can easily lose one's way inside it...Atop it is a mosque said to be blessed where people pray to obtain benediction...We prayed in the aforementioned blessed mosque and saw the wonders of its construction to which no description can do justice."
Ibn Jubair, *Rihlat Ibn Jubair fi Misr wa Bilad Al-'Arab wa Al-'Iraq wa Al-Sham wa Saqaliyya 'Asr Al-Huroub Al-Salibiya* (Ibn Jubair's Trip to Egypt, the Arab Countries, Iraq, the Levant and Sicily in the Age of the Crusades), ed Hussein Nassar, Cairo: Maktabat Masr, pp 9-10



Thiersch's reconstruction of the Pharos; reproduced from Breccia's *Alexandrea Ad Aegyptum*



"At length on April 5th (1326) we reached Alexandria...I went to see the lighthouse on this occasion and found one of its faces in ruins. It is a very high square building, and its door is above the level of the earth. Opposite the door, and of the same height, is a building from which there is a plank bridge to the door; if this is removed there is no means of entrance...It is situated on a high mound and lies three miles from the city on a long tongue of land which juts out into the sea from close by the city wall, so that the lighthouse cannot be reached by land except from the city. On my return to the West in the year 750 [1349] I visited the lighthouse again, and found that it had fallen into so ruinous a condition that it was not possible to enter it. Al-Malik an-Nasir had started to build a similar lighthouse alongside it but was prevented by death from completing the work."
Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa*, tr H A R Gibb, London: Routledge & Sons, 1939, p46

"I am really worried about the repairing of many important monuments of Greater Alexandria that are in the open...The greatest thing in Alexandria is the Pharos...Almost certainly, stones of the original Pharos exist in position...Apart from its own value, therefore, as largely a mediaeval monument, Fort Kait Bey is of priceless value as indicating and preserving a structure which the ancients considered as of such transcendent importance, that they put only six other things in the same class."
Letter to the editor, *The Egyptian Gazette*, 15 March 1934; quoted in *Mareotis*, Anthony de Cosson, London: Country Life Ltd, 1935, pp 113-4

Keep thinking!



Here is question two of the October quiz:

A well-known camel market in Upper Egypt is the terminal for the caravan route from the Sudan. Do you know its name?

Name...
Address...
Tel. No. (if available)..
Answer to Question 1, issue 241
Answer to Question 2, issue 242
Answer to Question 3, issue 243
Answer to Question 4, issue 244

Post your entry to
Travel Quiz
Al Ahram-Weekly,
Al-Ahram,
9th Floor,
Sharia Al-Galaa,
Cairo.



Nahed Abdel-Moneim holding the champion's cup after winning first place

In your face action

Try as they might, try as they may, but the men's volleyball team could not seize the day. **Abeer Anwar** reports

It was full steam ahead for the nine countries participating in the 5th Arab Juniors Volleyball Championship, held in Cairo's Ahli Club from 19 September to 7 October. The under-19 championship, which was postponed for two years following the Gulf War, was the scene of several other heated battles from which, in the men's competition, Bahrain emerged first and Egypt followed in second place.

But if the men's team was stuffed by the Bahrainis, the women's team fared one better. Following their face-gaining victory over Zambia and Nigeria in the African National Qualifiers, the prelude to the World Cup scheduled to be held in Japan in November, the women's team went on to trounce Syria and Sudan, 3-0 and Tunisia, 3-1 to capture the championship cup.

A strong performance by Tahani Tosson earned her the best spiker and best player titles, while Susan Saleh was named best blocker. The other categories went to players from Tunisia and Syria.

Self confidence was the name of the game for the men's team, who brushed by Kuwait and Palestine, 3-0, and wrestled a hard-fought 3-1 victory against Tunisia to take first in the Group B competition. They moved on to volley and spike for a 3-0 triumph over Group A and C second place finalists, Sudan and Jordan, which left them once again pitted against the Tunisians in the semi-finals. Burned by their loss in the qualifiers, Tunisia's players vowed revenge, but were unable to put their money where their mouth was. Egypt took the Tunisians to school, and by the time the buzzer had gone off, Tunisia had lost 3-0.

Elated and inflated, Egypt then faced Bahrain. The men's team won the first set 15-9, but the Bahraini team, made up of several professional players returned the courtesy and took the second set 15-3 in only 20 minutes. In the third set, the men's team squeezed by their Bahraini counterparts 15-11.

The victory had apparently gone to their heads, and it cost them. In a give and take match, the Bahrainis triumphed 15-12, leaving the Egyptians stewing in their own juices and fearful of the fifth set. In this case, their fears were justified. The Bahraini team drew the set to a close 15-8, winning the match 3-2.

Egypt's Nehad Shebeta and Mohamed Dessouki were named best servers and best defender.



Egypt's Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz spiking a ball while Bahrain's players are on guard

photos: Amr Gamal

Slap-stick story

Win, lose or draw, the Egyptian national hockey team always seems to fall victim to circumstance. **Eric Asomugha** reports

One can please some of the people some of the time, but not all the people all of the time, as was the case with Egypt's hockey team. Despite their pre-game trials and tribulations, they returned from Zimbabwe with the silver medal, only to face a welcoming committee which heaped, instead of congratulations, criticism for not capturing the gold.

And now, true to the spirit of Murphy's Law, the Egyptian Hockey Federation (EHF) is at loggerheads with the Cairo Stadium Authority (CSA) over the use of the pitch.

The CSA has asserted that the EHF can have access to the pitch, which is made of artificial turf, six times a week, twice a day, with the seventh day set aside for maintenance.

"This problem is deeply troubling. With a large number of clubs requiring access to this pitch, a compromise must be reached," said EHF president, Gamal Shirazi.

His concern stems from the fact that with the onset of winter, natural grass is not suitable for training as it absorbs too much moisture. Artificial turf can be maintained quite easily by employing more workers who utilise the existing network of pipes to wet the pitch. The entire process would take about 30 minutes.

"Other countries," he argued, "are willing to extend and allocate the resources necessary for promoting the sport and training the players."

Although Shirazi has lodged a formal protest, the outcome is yet to be determined. "I'm not sure if we will succeed," he said, adding, "This is very disappointing."

If a compromise is not reached, this stalemate could prove disastrous for the EHF, which has already faced more than its fair share of difficulties.

Prior to their departure for the All Africa Games, a controversial decision had been reached by Egypt's Supreme Council for Youth and Sports (SCYS) decreeing that the team would not participate in the Atlanta Olympics in 1996.

In addition, for more than a year before the Games began, Egypt was without a national hockey team. But six months before the competition, players were assembled from different clubs and coached by a new staff headed by Gheit Azim (coach) and Montasser Mustafa (trainer). The team was put through an intensive training programme which included practice three times-a-day.

With a number of the veteran players already retired, a group of fresh faced, talented but inexperienced players were recruited. Given the varying levels of experience on the team, the most prudent policy would have been to participate in as many training matches as possible.

"There should have been a minimum of 40 test matches, and we should have begun training a year ago," recalled Azim. The problem, however, was the age-old nemesis of Egyptian sports, inadequate funding.

But when the going got tough, the hockey team got going. Brushing aside their problems, the team went on to take the silver in the Zimbabwe Games and earned the respect of the International Hockey Federation.

The predecessors to this team, which included some of the same players, have an impressive win record. They have captured the Africa Nations Cup four times and high-sticked their way to the gold in the Cairo All Africa Games in 1991. This record has left the EHF and many fans wondering just what it will take for hockey to get the recognition, respect and funding, from the SCYS, it deserves.

Bulging biceps and lace

Forget the taffeta dresses, Egyptian women are rolling up their sleeves and tensing their triceps. **Dalia El-Hennawy** reports

Joining the ranks of top-ranked Egyptian athletes is Nahla Said Osman, who took third in the 4th Arm-wrestling Championship held from 7-13 September in Zurich. For Osman, the competition was intense, but by no means as trying as the struggle to gain acceptance for arm wrestling in Egypt.

The first steps to transform the sport from one where the loser of a match has to pay for dinner, to a federation sport, were launched in 1992 by Major-General Osman Abdel-Ghani. The idea was taken to Abdel-Moneim Emara, the head of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports. Emara subsequently formed a committee to evaluate the proposal, which was approved by a majority of the committee members.

To prove that an interest in the sport did exist, Abdel-Ghani travelled to a school in the Upper Egypt city of Sohag to recruit participants. He then selected 68 girls to participate in the country's first arm-wrestling championship.

"At first, people didn't believe that this sport was suitable for girls," said Abdel-Ghani, "but a word of mouth campaign launched to assure people that the clothing required would be conservative laid to rest many concerns."

Among those who responded to the call for arms was 17-year old Nahla Said Osman, the daughter of a world-champion body builder.

"The support and encouragement I received was more than expected," remarked Nahla. "I was very scared at the beginning of the championship since I had only arm-wrestled with my brothers for fun. This was a new experience for me, but now that I'm ranked third in the world, I've set my sights on the gold."

Abdel-Ghani felt confident that the sport would attract a large following. Unlike overtly physical sports such as judo, karate and tae kwon do, arm-wrestling requires strength instead of force. For Nahla, this requirement fits the bill perfectly.

"With the right training techniques, one can build up strength without developing large muscles," explained Nahla whose weight training programme is supervised by her father. "The training is not a problem, we just need some time in order to catch up with the countries which have been into arm-wrestling for a long time," she noted. Of the 11 countries participating in the Zurich championship, Egypt took third, Switzerland placed second and Holland captured first.

The approval for the federation has been granted and the participants are now lined up, ready, waiting, and as in the case of Nahla, already proven competitors. It now remains to be seen if other arm-wrestlers in the country can help put Egypt's name at the top of the list of 65 International Arm-wrestling Federation member countries.

Romancing the score

The future of Egyptian soccer hangs in limbo following Egypt's match against AS Roma. **Ahmed Said** reports

If absence makes the heart grow fonder, then the seven Ahli players, who missed the match between Egypt's national team and Italy's Division 1 AS Roma due to a prior commitment in the Arab Club Cup in Tunisia, were sorely missed by their teammates. However, their absence did not make the team any weaker.

In preparing the strategy for the match, the first in a series of matches to be held in the next three months in preparation for the finals of the 1996 African Nations Cup in Johannesburg, the team's head coach, Mohsen Saleh, placed his bets on the seven Zamalek players on the team being able to hold their own against their skilled Italian opponents. His bet paid off, with Egypt tying AS Roma, 2-2.

Relying on the offensive abilities of Hazem Imam and Ahmed Sari, the Egyptian team turned up the heat on the Italians. Perhaps a little too much as the Italians countered quickly to score two goals, one by Uruguayan-born striker, Fonseca, and the second by mid-fielder, Tuiti, in the first ten minutes.

But when the time came to put out or get out, Egypt came through. A red card whipped out by referee Gamal El-Ghandour sent Gianini trotting off the field and gave Ahmed El-Kass Egypt's first goal of the match. Then a beautifully calculated kick by Ahmed Sari curved the ball away from AS Roma's defenders and sent it into the top right hand corner of the net to tie the score at 2-2. Subsequent efforts by both teams to score, however, proved fruitless.

While for the Egyptian team, the outcome of the next series of matches is hard to predict, for Mohsen Saleh, the writing is already on the wall. This match was Saleh's last as coach of the national team. Federation chairman, Dahshouri Harb has promoted Dutchman Rudi Kroll from Olympic team head coach to national team head coach, thereby remanding Saleh to the subordinate rank of assistant coach.

Saleh may be demoralised by the demotion, especially after a coaching style for the last nine months which displayed rigour and enthusiasm, but Kroll is unfazed. The Dutchman has announced plans to concentrate on developing the skills of younger players, a move which has already come under fire by veteran team members. The ensuing friction between the old teammates and the new, coupled with the Kroll-Saleh rift, has the alarming potential of escalating team tension. But the proof is in the pudding, a fact that will come to light during the finals of the African Nations Cup in South Africa.



photo: Mohamed Wassim

Roma's goalkeeper upsetting Salah Abu Greisha's attempt to score

October festival — Bedouin style

LAST Saturday, the 5th Sinai Tribes Camel Festival was held in Al-Arish commemorating the October War, Bedouin style reports **Nashwa Abdel-Tawab** from Al-Arish. With thousands of *gallabiya*-clad fans in attendance, 500 camels and their riders, representing 12 Egyptian tribes from Sinai, South Sinai, Ismailia and Al-Sharqiya, blazed across the desert, reviving a decades-old desert tradition. Breaking free from the herd to win first place with 46 points was Al-Aiadia tribe, followed by Al-Hewaitat tribe in a close second.

Despite the appearance of general pandemonium, there is a good deal of rhyme and reason in the organisation of the event. The races were broken down according to the age of the camel, with two races set aside for camels between 4-5 years old, one for 6 year old camels, two for 7 year old camels and two for camels 8 years old and above. Young camels run one lap around the 3km oval track, while middle-aged camels run either two or three laps. Older camels run a 4 lap, or 12km, race.

In general, the race is restricted to riders 16 years old or above, but the tenacious efforts of two 12-year old males paid off. They both won first place in their respective races, and humiliated the older riders in the process. Overall, in four of the races, new records were set. The 35 winners, or the first five in every race, took home a pot of LE30,450.

Edited by **Inas Mazhar**

Insaf Aziz:
Food for the soul

"Make yourself useful," is her advice. As the women of Boulaq know, these are not idle words

Everyone seems to know who this smiling matron with soft skin and wiry grey hair is. As she strides out of her Shubra apartment, the fruit sellers and shop owners of the neighbourhood greet her with respect. Though her quick steps strain the seams of the straight black skirt that falls a few inches below her knees, only the soft jingle of the bracelets on her left wrist warns the unsuspecting that Insaf Aziz is right behind them. When she sees friends, she walks to their side and gently hugs them in greeting. She spies a young couple strolling with a toddler taking tentative steps between them. "I was the one who got them married," she says, lining her two index fingers together for emphasis.

Insaf Aziz, a tireless 75-year-old, has always known her true profession. Born in 1920 in Assiut, she was inspired by the women of her own family to pursue social work. "I saw my grandmother, who went from house to house to sit with poor women and pray. And when someone knocked at our door, she would always open it and do her best to help the person... This taught me that I must love the poor." The widow smiles and becomes nostalgic when she thinks of her grandmother walking the streets of the southern Egyptian city, searching for people in need of help.

While Aziz says she always kept her door open to the poor of Assiut, she did not work in an official capacity until after her family moved to Cairo in 1969. "In Assiut, I was busy raising my own children. But when I came to this city, things were different. I had more time and my children were practically grown then," she says reflectively.

Since 1974, Aziz has been the social mainstay of the Boulaq Centre, which has provided aid to the poor under the auspices of the Anglican Church in Cairo since 1925. At the centre itself she is an advisor, confidante and surrogate mother to approximately 100 women and their families, most of whom live in the poor neighbourhood of Boulaq, a maze of haphazard streets and rough adobe structures hidden behind the monumental office buildings on the Nile corniche. About 50 others who are unable to come to the centre by themselves depend on the frequent visits of Aziz and hardworking staff members for their help and support. The centre's new building in Boulaq is currently under construction, and at the moment Aziz and her colleagues are working from the Episcopalian Church just over Abul-Ela bridge in Zamalek.

The woman herself is modest about her role as the guardian angel of Cairo's unfortunates. "I knew Bishop Ghais, the head of the Anglican Church in Cairo, and he knew how much I loved the poor. So he asked me to work for him, and I did so without question." Aziz has never aspired to rising in the ranks of administrative church positions, and prefers simply to work with the poor on a daily basis. Social services in the church are currently under the direction of Salwa Sabri, the director of the Boulaq Centre.

The tireless social worker is the last of a generation of Egyptian Christians directly influenced by American missionaries. In the first half of the nineteenth century, religious awakenings in the United States and England produced a missionary movement that sent its first representatives to China, the Pacific Islands, and various parts of the Middle East. Although the Americans who initially hoped to convert Muslims in predominantly Islamic regions had scarce success, they did attract some Christians in the Levant and Egypt, where one Reverend Hogg achieved fame by distributing scriptures and giving speeches from a travelling houseboat on the Nile.

His message was particularly well received in Assiut, where American missionaries subsequently founded a number of schools with the help of wealthy local families. Aziz frequently talks about her mother, who was a teacher at the Assiut College, a preparatory school run by the American mission. "My grandmother was of the first generation in Assiut, my mother was the second, and my daughter was the fourth," she says proudly, gesturing to a picture of an attractive brunette on the wall of her modest Shubra apartment. She is the last of her family, however, to devote herself to social work. Her children have chosen other professions, though Aziz's own sister, an emigrant to Australia, is also a social worker.

'In the Boulaq Centre itself, where a roomful of hungry women wait for the meal provided for them several times a week, Insaf greets and counsels the figures clad in black, who rest their heads in their hands and smile when they look at her'

Aziz herself has been essential in making the Boulaq Centre evolve to meet the needs of Cairo's downtrodden. "After I started work there, I began to visit the poor. There were 300 families who would come to the centre for help, although Muslims would not come simply because of the place's Christian affiliation. So we made sure we visited them as well, to take food and medicine and give comfort." It was during these rounds of Cairo's poorest alleys that Aziz became aware of the plight of so many poor women, many of whom had left their native towns and villages for Cairo with disastrous results.

In the Boulaq Centre itself, where a roomful of hungry women wait for the meal provided for them several times a week, Insaf greets and counsels the figures clad in black, who rest their heads in their hands and smile when they look at her. Every one of them has a story, and the social worker calls one forward who has a tattoo in the shape of a cross on her chin.

Aziz takes the quiet woman's hand and holds it tightly as she tells a frightening story. "This one from Beni Suef married a man who then fell in love with someone else. Her husband tried to abandon her by going to Cairo, but she followed him to the city with her son and found the man. So then he abandoned her once again, but this time he planted drugs in her apartment and called the police anonymously. She was sentenced to 20 years in prison, but was allowed out after six for good behaviour. "We found her a place to live and give her a stipend for food." After Aziz finishes, the woman returns to her seat without a word.

Next, the social worker gestures to a gaunt figure with a graceful face, who lifts her slender body from the corner of a bench in the centre and shuffles to the front. "I found Um Dawoud, who is originally from Sohag, on the street with her son because her husband had kicked her out. She is blind and didn't have a place to go. So we found a room for her to live in and furniture for her to use. We also paid for an operation to fix her knee so that she could walk." Um Dawoud spontaneously lifts up the heavy hem of her black cotton dress, revealing her knee with its straight pink scar on the side.



photos: Jihan Ammar

So many of the women Aziz talks about desperately needed to be rescued. This is exactly what she did during her first few years at the centre, until an American researcher, Andrea Rugh, came to the church in the mid-seventies to work with Aziz and gather sociological data for a book. After seeing the plight of the women who had no one but Aziz to turn to, Rugh suggested that the Boulaq Centre lend money to poor families to pursue their own projects.

The suggestion was a good one. Hundreds of people have pursued their own projects and become more self-sufficient as a result. "Men have borrowed from the centre, like this person, who eventually was able to open up his own grocery," Insaf says, fingering a faded Kodak snap of a *galabiya*-clad man in his shop, "And most of them paid us back," she adds with a smile.

But the majority of the participants have been female. The grey-haired grandmother shuffles through dozens of photographs of earnest women performing various tasks. "This one bought a vermicelli machine for LE100 and now supports herself by selling her products. And this lady bought a *fiteer* oven for LE130 and now works for herself." Aziz says she considers all the women to be her children.

The affection of the women whose lives the social worker has changed is clear: murmured expressions of thanks and recognition meet Aziz in every alley of Boulaq. Her philosophy is clear: "We must impart a work ethic to the young. They must find something to do with themselves and work. Make yourself useful," she commands, before leaning back and settling into her chair.

Profile by **Jessica Jones**

Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

♦ When artist and Minister of Culture **Farouk Hosni** recently inaugurated a plastic art exhibition at the Zamalek Arts Centre featuring the works of 150 young artists from art colleges nation-wide, I was standing right beside him. On no account was I going to let an opportunity to see creativity at its best pass me by. And it was during the inauguration that I saw 48 of these young artists awarded a total of eighty thousand pounds prize money by **Hosni** for the wonderful ideas which had gone into their impressive works.

♠ The gallant heroes who won us the war 22 years ago weren't just courageous combatants. Quite a few were also creative artists. Last Monday at 7pm I just had to leave all my work for a while and pop next door to the lobby of Al-Ahram's main building to attend the inauguration, by Major General **Samir Farag** , director of the Armed Forces Moral and Welfare Affairs Department, of a fabulous plastic art exhibition featuring the works of these heroes. And as if that in itself wasn't enough to deserve my unqualified support of the event, the reception, hosted by *Al-Ahram*'s General Manger **Ali Ghoneim**, and Major General **Ibrahim El-Maghrabi**, director of the War Veterans Association, was also a marvellous occasion to celebrate the 22nd anniversary of the October victory.

♣ Most of you already know **Milad Hanna** through the pages of *Al-Ahram* and the *Weekly*, where his enlightening and interesting articles are often published. What you probably *don't* know is what I know. And that, dears, is the good news that last Sunday Hanna, a former head of the Housing Committee in the People's Assembly and urban planning expert, became a senior consultant for the UNDP's National Project for Regional Planning for Egypt.

♥ The American Centre for Press and Public Affairs' new location is now at the US Embassy, and so recently, along with more than four hundred guests, that's precisely where I was. Among the more impressive guests who attended were **Abdel-Rahman El-Baz** from the Ministry of Education, head of Cairo University's political science department **Mahmoud Ismail**, *Al-Ahram*'s and Al-Azhar's **Hassan Wagih** and writers **Wafeya Khairy** and **Fawzia Mahran**. After we were charmingly greeted by US Information Service Director **William Cavness**, Cultural Attaché **Janet Wilgus** and Centre Director **Christopher McShane**, we met with US Ambassador **Edmund Walker**, and the ever-popular English Language Programme Attaché **Johanna Kovitz**. As the music played and refreshments flowed, we wandered into the new American Studies Library. Some of us had already seen it and — not wasting any time — even become members, but those who hadn't expressed audible amazement. We all agreed that although the new centre lacked the charm of the old one, it was *definitely* much more state of the art.

♠ German ambassador **Wolf-Dietrich Schilling** recently hosted a reception to pay tribute to the outstanding achievements and high quality productions of Egyptian film makers. In particular, though, the reception was to award the Egyptian documentary film director **Ali El-Ghazouli** the Prix Futura 1995 Prize for his amazing documentary on daily life in a fishing village in Egypt. "Twilight Fishing" was selected from 23 entries from 14 countries earlier this year. This, dears, is a lot more impressive than you may think. I know for a fact that the Prix Futura Prize is one of the most renowned prizes awarded at the Berlin Prix Futura International TV and Radio Festival, organised every two years.

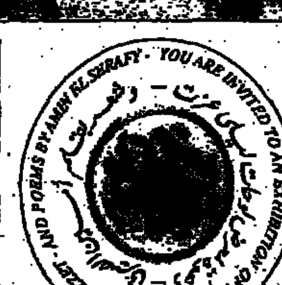
♦ My good friend **Leila Izzet**'s exhibitions are ones I always look forward to. From horses, suns, and spots, she never fails to astonish me with the themes she chooses for each exhibition. Showing from 16 October at El Patio, **Lamia Hassanein's** art gallery in Maadi, **Leila's** works this year have a distinct circular look about them, and are sure to either send the viewers in a spin, or leave them with severe cricks in their necks. Aiming at all costs to avoid the angle, **Leila** presents to us the abstract windmills and whirlpools in her mind. Luckily for us, though, her exhibition will be accompanied with poetry by **Amin El-Serafi**, written, quite mercifully, the right way up and in straight lines.



photo: Saleh Omar







Clockwise: Milad Hanna; Farouk Hosni admires an impressive piece at the Zamalek Arts Centre; Turkish delights galore at the Helnan Shepheard; Leila Izzet: in a spin; The happy couple: May and Abdel-Fattah bask in the sunshine of their lives; A proud El-Ghazouli receives his award from Ambassador Schilling

♥ I just love getting together with the girls every now and then for tea and a nice chat. Last week I joined the wives of foreign and Arab petroleum experts working in Egypt for lunch at the Sofitel Hotel. During the meal, **Gayle Young**, head of CNN's Cairo office spoke to us about her life and rather interesting career in media in Egypt and the Middle East. Something I found *somewhat* bland compared to my own lifestyle, but I suppose that can't be helped. Strange, isn't it, how one's own life can make one forget that out there most women have to deal with the harsh realities of daily life.



♥ Election day is fast approaching, dears, and though I am not telling how *I* will be voting come 29 November, you can get an inkling as to how many other Egyptians feel about political life in their country from the fascinating analysis provided by my friend **Dr Nader Fergani** and jointly issued — in Arabic — by Al-Mishkat Centre for Research and Training, and Dar Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi publishing house. The study is entitled "Egyptians and Politics: analytical perspectives on the results of an opinion poll", and I am proud to say that the opinion poll in question is none other than the one conducted by *Al-Ahram Weekly* late last year on a sample of 1,500 voting-age Egyptians, the results of which were published on the front page of our last issue of 1994.

Nader, who is recognised as one of the Arab world's most outstanding social scientists, acted as the *Weekly's* consultant on the poll, which he supervised to the smallest detail. With our full blessing, **Nader** went on to conduct a much more rigorous and extensive analysis of the poll results than could have ever been done in a newspaper. So if you want to anticipate how Egyptians will vote next November, dears, you'd better rush and grab a copy. For those whose literacy goes only as far as the English language, worry not: a translated version will appear on the market within a few days.

♠ When I first heard that the British Airways Theatre Company was coming to Cairo to perform their smash hit play, **William Douglas Home's** *The Secretary Bird*, for three nights in the Grand Ballroom of the Nile Hilton, my initial reaction was to flap my wings and do The Chicken. Not surprisingly, most of those around me were too young to have even heard of that glorious dance of my youth, and stared at me with blank astonishment. Oh well. Suffice to say that I'm sure that when I attend the troupe's final performance accompanied by dinner this coming Saturday, I will discover, much to my shame, that they are a lot funnier than I could ever dream to be. What do you expect, though, from a play that was labelled "devilishly funny" by *The Sunday Times*, and a hit at London's Savoy Theatre?

♣ Turkish delights galore were to be seen, tasted and worn at the Helnan Shepheard in Cairo recently. After a grand opening ceremony to get the Turkish Festival off to a smashing start, the "cradle of civilisation" brought forth a sumptuous array of traditional Turkish cuisine, handicrafts, live music and fashion right to the heart of Cairo. Hundreds of guests, including businessmen, media people and diplomats were greeted by the Turkish Ambassador **Yasar Yakis**, the Turkish consul **Ogushan Ertugrul**, **Hossam El-Fiki** the hotel's general manager, his assistant **Mohamed Hindawi** and Public Relations Manager **Inas Fouad**, and welcomed to a glorious event which — just ask me dears — was almost as exciting as visiting the wonderful country itself.

♥ Forget weddings that take place after sunset in the pitch dark. There's nothing better than holding a wedding in the brilliant sunshine, and that's exactly what my wonderful friend, head of the Arab Academy for Science and Technology, **Gamal El-Din Mokhtar**, did for his daughter. With only a memory of a cute little girl in pigtails and pretty dresses, it came a bit of a shock to see how much **May** had grown. But this was her wedding day, after all, and she had blossomed into a charming young lady, looking radiant as she stood by her husband, **Abdel-Fattah Abdel-Aziz Agameya**, son of one of Alexandria University's Faculty of Commerce's most distinguished professors.

Not only was the wedding itself a splendid event, and one that I wouldn't have missed for all the world, but with anyone who was anyone in Alexandria in attendance, it also gave me the chance to make my rounds and mingle with old friends, especially Alexandria's Governor **Ismail El-Gawsaki** and new acquaintances. There were two old friends in particular that I knew I would find somewhere near the buffet — I located actor **Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz** as he was happily tucking into a generous portion of pasta at the Italian corner. Singer **Sayed Mekkawi** proved a little more difficult to find. After singing a wonderful song he had written especially for the bride, whom he had known since she was a baby, he suddenly disappeared. Much later, I finally spotted him, beating the heat in his own way by indulging in an ice-cream sundae supreme.

